Fascinology in the Society and Literature of the British Isles

Milagros Torrado Cespón

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Universidade de Santiago de Compostela

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Doutor Fernando Alonso Romero

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0. Introduction

The study of a superstition in the era of technology seems for many a waste of time. When you explain that you are doing so within the field of philology, some of those who you used to call colleagues accuse you of investigating something of no use for linguistics. Then, you try to explain that philology is not only the study of a language, but the study of all that surrounds its circumstances, from invasions to customs and traditions. Some of them understand it; others carry on thinking that you are a second-rate philologist because you get up before dawn to check if the solstice sun rises in line with a determined point above a sacred stone. Fortunately, you are able to ignore those comments and you carry on getting up early in the morning.

It is then when you give another turn of the screw daring to say that, within folklore, you are studying fascinology, a word that sounds very interesting until your interlocutor realizes that you are talking about the evil eye. Many people start thinking about those late night programs where a group of people with supposed divinatory powers read your future and tell you to do strange rituals with black candles. So you explain that what you are trying to do is gather what was once alive in a society without television and the internet and check if some of that has survived to the present time. This means that you have to read so many books that you cannot even remember the number. Some months later your work starts looking interesting. However, among those who considered you as a second-rate philologist, you find some who, not only continue disregarding your study, but even consider you a threat for them and long for your destruction. At this point your doubts disappear: the evil eye is still alive in the twenty first century.

Leaving at one side these type of problems, you start checking the information available in thousand of books which you can divide into two categories: those works available in libraries, on-line or at a reasonable price that you can easily get; and those which are almost inaccessible unless you invest a big amount of money. Luckily, in your way you can find many helping hands that can provide you with articles and pieces of information which, from your status as young investigator, you could never obtain. The presence of available texts on the Internet has meant a great advance in research work and has been a great help to access books and bibliography that otherwise I would never find. For example, most of the literary examples I have included in this thesis are taken from a web page which gathers many of the greatest texts in world literature and which offers free access to them[1]. This saves a lot of time because you do not need to borrow hundreds of books from the library which are not always available. On the other hand, this also means that the traditional way of quoting is modified, because these texts are presented in unnumbered pages, so the only thing you can do is state the chapter to which the fragment belongs. This also happens with many other on-line texts about folklore which I have used and appear with the year they were originally published but without a numbered reference. Nevertheless, although this means that the page from which the information was taken cannot be stated, it is easy finding it online just searching the key words and the author in an Internet searcher.

After this preliminary research, you realize that your investigation is interesting, mainly because many scholars have been doing work in this field. But then you start reading and finding the same data over and over again. Sometimes this proves that the evil eye has similar rituals all across the British Isles; other times, it

[1] The page I have been using is: http://www.literature-web.net/. Those examples which are taken from printed books can be identified because are quoted in the traditional format.

really means that there are half a dozen books that everybody has consulted and seems that all the important data finishes with them. As a consequence, you spend many days looking at your laptop waiting for the muses to provide you with some innovative ideas. At those moments, you wonder if your effort has any sense apart from completing an academic job. It does have it because, although your primary purpose is finishing your thesis, you are truly assisting the revival of an ancient tradition in which many people seem to be still interested. In this case, I am not talking about scholars, but common citizens who like to know customs and traditions. After talking to people both from Galicia and the British Isles, I can confirm this. Those times I am asked "What are you investigating?" by any one unfamiliar to cultural and philological studies, my answer is always the starting point of a conversation which usually begins with a sentence of the type "My grandmother knew someone who..." and which proves again that fascination is still alive in the mind of society, even if it is not practised.

Although this thesis may seem to be a bibliographic work, it is more than that. It includes testimonies I collected during my stay in the Isle of Man and help both from friends from the British Isles and people who kindly wrote me to tell me their own experiences. I was able to publish two articles demanding information in three newspapers (one in the Isle of Man and the other two in Wales) which provide me with some interesting data. Sometimes, I was able to find some facts which had not been published beforehand and that gave me certain sense of achievement. Gathering data is sometimes very boring and when you find something different or a new theory comes to your mind, you do not mind spending every weekend reading more to confirm your hypothesis. Nevertheless, the study of a superstition is a never ending job, with constant changes that you cannot always prove. You can never say

surely that something is in determinate way because there are always many variants of the same charms and cures. In this sense, traditions, the evil eye among them, could be metaphorically described as languages: in continuous development, losing some items and gaining others. Also, as languages, traditions risking their own destruction if the society which practices them decides to stop using them and erases them from its daily life.

Apart from the testimony of real people recorded along the centuries by outstanding scholars, I thought that it was also important to show the literary examples of the evil eye. I consider that if a superstition has an important role in the literature of a zone that means that it also plays an important role in its daily life because literature is a reflection of society itself. Up to this point, I can say that the importance of the evil eye belief in the society of the British Isles and, analogously, in its literature has been proved. Although sometimes the examples cited in literary works are attributed to other places in the world trying to give them a certain sense of exotic nature, this still means that a previous knowledge of the tradition does exist.

Fascinology in the Society and Literature of the British Isles is a research which tries to update fascination giving examples of past procedures, mainly during the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, but also telling what has survived to the present day. The way people confront the evil eye in the British Isles has varied enormously, as well as it happens in many other parts of the world, so it was necessary to bring it back to today's society. With this remark, I mean that society needs to be familiar with their own past superstitions because, although many do not make sense nowadays, they should be known in order to understand why we kept some customs or why we behave in a determinate way before a problem. We are

what the course of time has made us to be and forgetting or unknowing our traditions is missing an important part of ourselves.

The updating of the knowledge about the evil eye is also necessary for a reason of date. Apart from some general works in the last years, this is the first extensive study about fascination in the British Isles as a whole in the twenty-first century. So, although it has the shape of a thesis, I hope it to gain the interest of new researchers in the field of folklore.

When I first thought about the title, I wrote "British" instead of "British Isles" but later I considered that the latter was more appropriate. By saying "British" one is talking about political delimitations, but "British Isles" is a geographical division. Thus, places such as the Isle of Man or the Channel Islands are included in this thesis. Apart from that geographical division, what we are really seeing is how different cultures influenced the inhabitants of these isles, mainly, Celtic, Viking, Anglo-Saxon and Roman. Cultural influence of these civilizations was not the same in all of the isles, which resulted in the existence of common charms and amulets but showing differences in performance and use. As I am talking about cultural influence, this same study could be extrapolated to the rest of the European countries of the Atlantic shore but I have tried to limit the study to the British Isles, avoiding giving too much data about other countries where the belief is also present. The main reason for this is one of preciseness: I wanted to centre only on the British Isles. If not, this thesis could be have thousands of pages as exemplifies the French folklorist Arnold van Gennep (1873-1957) in a parody about a young researcher whose teacher told him to investigate the evil eye. After revising all the literature about the topic and learning many languages for a better understanding of the folklore of foreign countries, about fifty years had passed when he came to talk to his teacher, now

retired. He asked him if he had kept the bibliography up to date, which he had not. He finally died in the library trying to finish his notes. In the end, he was not able to write even the first page of his thesis (van Gennep, A. 1992, 5-8). Therefore, taking into account the vast amount of information one can obtain about the evil eye, restringing it to geographical part is a way of seeing your work written. This, of course does not mean that all is done. The evil eye in the British Isles, as well as in the rest of world, is constantly changing and I could never know everything about it even if, as the young researcher, I spend my lifetime doing so.

In this thesis we can find many charms and amulets but also the possible explanation of their use because knowing why something is used against the evil eye is a way of getting a better understanding of the superstition. Unluckily, finding the starting point of this belief is sometimes very difficult or, even, impossible. In spite of the certain sense of incompleteness this may imply, the fact of not being able to prove everything gives me a reason to continue with my investigation. There are also some theories of my own which I have tried to prove taking into account the material available. Nevertheless, the interpretation of folklore is neither exact or invariable mainly because superstitions, traditions and customs are anterior to written records. Thus, as long as justified with appropriate data, any interpretation may be considered as possible.

I also considered that it was important including illustrations and pictures so the information could be better understood. This is especially relevant in the case of amulets which, although sometimes are common, need this kind of evidence. Getting this photographic material meant being able to find the amulet by myself, which, in the case of some, meant spending a long time walking in the countryside looking for the necessary samples (the best example is the known as “snakestone” the search of

which occupied many of my few free afternoons). Those photographs which are not mine are always used by permission from their authors or from the museums where they were taken. There are also a couple of images which are of public domain and which, luckily are available on the Internet.

Reading books, searching the web, asking people, writing to newspapers, taking photographs or travelling to lands you would never thought of visiting was one of the most enriching experiences of my academic life. I can truly state that the elaboration of this thesis made me realize that me that human being is not as self-centred as many assert. All this work could not be done without the help of many people, from those scholars who investigated folklore in the nineteenth century to those individuals who provided me with information without asking anything in return.

After all these considerations, I hope that such a "fascinating" thesis will fulfil all the expectations I have placed in it and which has meant that my interest in folklore is now greater and stronger.

1. What Do We Understand by Fascination?

"Fascination", from the Latin word *fascinatio* (possibly from Greek βασκανοσ, "sorcerer") meaning "evil spell" has been used as a synonym for "evil eye" since antiquity. Virgilio (70 a.C. 19 a.C.) already said in his third Eclogue (written between 41 y 37 a. C.): "nescio quis teneros oculus mihi fascinate agnos"[2]. Although now obsolete, the term "fascination" has as a meaning in English "to affect by witchcraft or magic; to bewitch, enchant, lay under a spell" which makes it easily related to the evil eye concept. The first written record of this word which appears in the *Oxford English Dictionary* belongs to Ben Johnson's *Every Man in his Humor* (1598) "I was fascinated, by Jupiter: fascinated: but I will be unwitch'rd, and reveng'd, by law". In this example we find "unwitch" as an antonym of "fascinate", showing already the identification between witchcraft and the evil eye tradition which will be further analysed later on. Also in the *Oxford English Dictionary* we find an interesting example from John Jackson's *The True Evangelical Temper; Three Sermons* (1641), which provides another suitable reference for the topic of this thesis: "Man is a Basilisk fascinating with an envious eye the prosperity of his neighbour". Here we must pay attention to three important elements: "basilisk", "envy" and "eye". The first of them introduces a mythological animal which will be seen in more detail later on and which has the power of killing with its eyes. "Envy", one of the deadly sins, is the main force which triggers the evil eye. Finally, the "eye" is the organ which is able to cause this enchantment, represented as rays and

[2] I do not know whose eyes fascinated my tender lambs.

impurities from the body which are able to cause misfortune and also illnesses, something that the Spanish fray Martín de Castañega explained in 1529:

> salen por los ojos como unos rayos, las impuridades y suziedades mas sotiles del cuerpo e quando más sotiles, tanto mas penetrantes e mas aflicionan (De Castañega, M. 1994, 34)

This was also believed in England during the time of the Black Death, when the glance of a sick person was enough to transmit the disease (Park, R. 1912, 15).

However, in spite of its original meaning, the term "fascination" or "fascinate" has acquired a more benevolent connotation in the sense of causing admiration or astonishment. Therefore, many people are fascinated by the beauty of a sunset but, although the sun is closely related to evil eye (something that will be proved later on), this does not mean that a curse has fallen on them. From a linguistic point of view, we could say that the term "fascination" is no longer transparent to the common English speaker. It has, therefore, been relegated to more learned uses, becoming the expressions including the words of native origin more employed. The phrase used in English to designate it is "evil eye" and the act of casting the evil eye is mostly known as "overlook". There existed the word "malscrung" in Old English as an equivalent of "evil eye". It appears in *Bald's Leechbook*, a medical text compiled around the ninth century under the variant "malscra":

> Look for little stones in the crops of shallow nestlings, and take care that they do not touch the earth nor water nor other stones. Sew three of them up in whatever you wish, put them on the man who has need; it will soon be well for him. They are good against headaches and eye pain, and temptations of the enemy, and night-walkers and "spring illness" and

> nightmare and restraint by means of herbs, and **malscra** and
> enchantment by evil arts[3]

In the *Nine Herbs Charm* we also find this word, in this case under the spelling "malscrunge":

> wið feondes hond and wið færbregde,
> wið **malscrunge** manra wihta. [4]

This charm is part of Lacnunga text, an Anglo-Saxon manuscript written around the eleventh century. In it, there is an account of the power of the nine herbs which the Anglo-Saxons considered sacred.

The word "eye" is present in all the generic names given to fascination in the British Isles in their correspondent language. Thus, the Irish named it as "súil milledach", meaning destructive or malefic eye. There also exists the term "suil Balor", which is related to the mythological character Balor of the Evil Eye, a Fomorian warrior with whom I will deal later on. In Ireland there were also those known as "eye biters", which were those people who could "rime either man or beast to death" (Dalyell, J.G. 1836, 46), so when children or cattle fell suddenly ill, they were thought to be "eye-bitten". "Eye-biting" was considered an involuntary from of the evil eye but also, during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I (1558-1603), it was considered as an epidemic illness among the Irish cattle which rendered them blind. Witches were thought to be mainly responsible for this malady and, when found, were arrested, tried and executed (Guiley, R. E. 1989, 29). In Scotland, the expression means the same as in English, "droch-shùil", although there is also the term "buidseachd"; in the Isle of Man we find the name "drogh sooill", meaning also

[3] PDE version by Audrey L. Meaney (Meaney, A. L. 1981: 7). In Cockayne's version (Cockayne, O. 1865: 307) we find "malscra" translated as "fascination"
[4] Against the enemy's hand and against mighty devices, / against the fascination of evil creatures (PDE version by Milagros Torrado)

"evil eye"; and in Wales either the label "llygad drwg" or "llygad mall" have that meaning. In Wales and in some parts of England there also exists the term "owl blasting", a form of ill-wishing which appears to be more related to natural forces than to a mortal's will. This term is applied, for example, to the sudden destruction of a forest, as recorded in Pwhyll-gor, a village of the Welsh Borders where "trees appeared burnt or seared, and there was great discussion whether lighting could strike without a concurrent storm or thunder clap" (Bland, O. 1920, 151). Nevertheless, we can find more ways of naming the evil eye, especially locally, such as "ill'ee" or "uncanny eye"; as well as the effects, such as "eye-smitten", "blasted" or "eye-bitten"; or the action, such as "overlook" or "bewitch". Taking this into account, we can appreciate a certain sense of taboo with the use of the original expression (evil eye) which has derived in different names which can be understood by all but which still do not have all the negative connotations.

The presence of the term "eye" is, as it can be noticed, very important when talking about this belief. The eye is considered as a way out for sin and evil desires. As they are considered the mirror of the soul, eyes reflect the true feelings of their owner. In Mediterranean cultures, blue eyes are believed to be more prone to possess this power. A clear example of the identification of blue eyes with evil eyes in Mediterranean cultures is the use of a blue eye image to counteract the evil eye effects in Turkey. On the contrary, in the British Isles, very dark eyes or eyes with two different colours are suspicious, as that eye we find in *Freya of the Seven Isles* (1912), by Joseph Conrad[5]:

> Poor father! How furious he will be--how upset! And afterwards, what tremors, what unhappiness! Why had she not been open with him from the first? His round, innocent

[5] All the literary examples which do not follow traditional quoting are taken from http://www.online-literature.com/

> stare of amazement cut her to the quick. But he was not looking at her. His stare was directed to Heemskirk, who, with his back to him and with his hands still up to his face, was hissing curses through his teeth, and (she saw him in profile) glaring at her balefully with one black, evil eye.

The Irish also identify the evil eye beholder if the person presents lowering brows and sunken eyes (Wilde, F. 1890). Nevertheless, the existence of an evil eye can be averted according to this description:

> unsteady as the ocean waves, it rolls around and about in fevered restlessness now extended, it exhibits its orb clear of the lid, surrounded by the white, in angry convulsion – now half closed, it questions with wariness and shallow cunning – now calm and dead as Lethe[6], it represses the pale beam of is malice, and with saintly bearing seems pity itself, the herald of cordiality, the star of friendship and rectitude. But it is all the charmed disguised of the magician, that he may make his spells the surer. The "evil eye" is still the same, its Tophetic[7] beams are less visible, only from hope that they may more effectually operate on the objects of their malignity (Anonymous, 1829, 394).

An evil eye is an eye that produces fear and discomforts on the one it is fixed. An example of this appears in chapter 21 of *Lysbeth: A Tale of the Dutch* (1901), a novel by the English writer H. Rider Haggard:

> "I don't like the look of him", repeated the Professor.
> "I say that he makes me feel cold down the back – he has the evil eye".

[6] Lethe was a Greek goddess who represented oblivion.
[7] Hellish

The definition of "evil eye" given by *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* talks about a destructive force capable of bringing death:

> glance believed to have the ability to cause injury or death to those on whom it falls: children and animals are thought to be particularly susceptible. Belief in the evil eye is ancient and ubiquitous (...). The power of the evil eye is sometimes held involuntary (...). More frequently, however, malice toward and envy of prosperity and beauty are thought to be the cause. Thus, in medieval Europe –and in popular superstition today- it was considered unlucky to be praised or to have one's possessions praised, so that some qualifying phrase such as "as God will" or "God bless it" was commonly used (...). (McHenry, R. (ed) 1993).

In this definition, envy appears as one of the main causes and, being it a sin, the best way to counteract its power is through God, showing a mixture between religion and popular tradition. What we can find more interesting in this explanation is the fact that this power can be involuntary, which means that some of those possessing this ill-wishing energy cannot avoid using it. Nevertheless, some people are more prone to possess an evil eye due to some characteristics closely related to envy. For example, the glance and excessive praise of a sterile woman to the newborn of her neighbour is for many a clear evidence of a disguised malicious intention. A beggar may look at the possessions of others with a desire of destruction, just as it is reflected in *Micah Clarke* (1889), by Arthur Conan Doyle, chapter 12, when a mendicant approaches:

> 'Gott in Himmel!' cried Saxon, 'it is ever thus! A gibbet draws witches as a magnet draws needles. All the hexerei of the

> country side will sit round one, like cats round a milk-pail. Beware of her! she hath the evil eye!'
> 'Poor soul! It is the evil stomach that she hath,' said Reuben, walking his horse up to her. 'Whoever saw such a bag of bones! I warrant that she is pining away for want of a crust of bread.'

The philosopher Avicenna (c. 980-1037) attributes the power of the evil eye to the soul:

> Very often the soul may have as much influence upon the body of another to the same extent as it has upon the body, for such is the influence of the eyes of anyone who by his glance attracts and fascinates another (Kramer, H. & Sprenger, J. 2008, 56).

A person can overlook a neighbour's abundant harvest seeing his own as inferior. These feelings show how "an evil eye is a diseased eye, an eye that sees objects indistinctly and distortedly, and very aptly illustrates evil disposition" (Clergymen of the United Church of England and Ireland, 1844, 56). But what is still more noteworthy is that even oneself can harm his own possessions. This happened to a certain man in Aberfoyle (Scotland), who killed his own cow after commending its fatness and shot a hare with his eyes because they were the animals he laid his glance on first in the morning (Dalyell, J.G. 1836, 4). In the view of the existence of these ill-fated people, the English had a drastic solution. Then, anyone suspected of having an evil eye was executed, as it happened in the 17th century to two women who had supposedly fascinated and caused the death of the Earl and Countess of Rutland and their two children (Daniels, C. L. and Stevans, C. M., 2003, 1267). In Ireland the power of the evil eye was also recognized by the *Brehon Laws*, ancient Irish laws which have been transmitted orally and which were supposedly created by

Saint Patrick in the fifth century. There, we can read that "if a person is in the habit of injuring things through neglect, or of will, whether he has blessed, or whether he has not blessed, full penalty be upon him, or restitution in kind" (Wilde, F. 1888)

One of the clearest explanations of the evil eye is the one given by the Scottish researcher R. C. Maclagan, who states that it

> is a result of an original tendency of the human mind. The irritation felt at the hostile look of a neighbour, still more of an enemy, is implanted in the breast of all, however much they may be influenced by moral teaching (Maclagan, R. C. 1902, 1).

This definition gives a feeling of resignation for it let us know that the evil eye is part of our own nature as much as the genetic code. In addition, this description of the evil eye gives us another clue for its identification by saying that the affected is not ill medically speaking. As a result, many unknown diseases have been hidden under the appearance of the evil eye not having a proper diagnosis. This was (and sometimes still is) the case of both mental and physical illnesses such as depression, rickets, lack of appetite, anaemia, tiredness and others related to bodily debilitation.

A little help from a diabolical figure (usually the Devil or a witch) is essential for other authors. The Galician scholar Xesús Rodríguez López states that the belief in the evil eye consists in supposing that human being, with the help or intervention of the Devil, can cause material damage over an individual, animals or even properties due to the influence of the power his glance[8] (Rodríguez López, X. 1993, 191). This definition, opposed to Maclagan's, releases human being of responsibility.

[8] consiste la creencia en el mal de ojo en suponer que el hombre, con ayuda o intervención del demonio, es capaz de producir males materiales, por la influencia de su mirada, sobre el individuo, sobre los animales y aún sobre la hacienda."

Here, the evil eye is a supernatural factor which can be obtained only through the intervention of an evil spirit. Consequently, the best way of fighting against this power is again in prayer and faith.

Professor Clarence Maloney identifies the common characteristics of the evil eye in different countries, which makes us think that the fact of having common characteristics means that fascination has also a common origin. He enumerates them as follows:

- The power emanates from the eye (sometimes mouth) and strikes some object or person.
- What is stricken is of value and its destruction or injury is sudden.
- The one casting the evil eye may not know he has the power; the one affected may not be able to identify the source of the power.
- The evil eye can be averted or its effect diminished or cured by particular rituals and symbols
- The belief helps to explain or rationalize sickness, misfortune or loss of possessions
- Envy is an important factor (Maloney, C. 1976, introduction).

Taking into account all these factors, people become self-conscious about been considered as superior among their fellows, for this could trigger an envious glance from an evil eye's possessor and, after what we have seen, anybody might have the power. Thus, society tends to doubt excessive praise because it could hide envy. As a consequence, good news such as a prize, a new job or any favourable happening is kept by many as a secret in the fear of an evil eye possessor. But envy can even go a step further: we can even feel envious about ourselves; about the

aspect we had years ago when we were younger or more beautiful. This feeling of rejection towards our current image provokes a case of split personality where there is a current "I" which envies a past "I" for considering it as superior. English superstition reflects something similar with a bridal tradition. If a bride wants to see herself in the mirror when she is fully dressed she must take off one of her gloves thus avoiding feeling envy of her own reflected image knowing that probably she would not be as beautiful as that anymore (McCartney, E. S. 1992, 19). In the same way, we can think how Narcissus was fascinated by his own reflected image.

It is interesting how the human being disguises a destructive action such as the evil eye under the appearance of great admiration. This shows that we are conscious of how morally wrong an ill wish is towards others' happiness. As we get older, we realize how unreliable people can be due to all those times trusting our fellows went wrong and when we have something worthy (a baby, beauty, wealth), we do not mind becoming superstitious. So, sometimes we prefer keeping silent about our happiness secretly afraid of an evil eye, even if we do not call it by this name.

Religion also plays an important role within fascination. When praise is addressed to something we consider of value, "God bless it" frequently follows the phrase. By naming God, any intention of overlooking will be revoked by divine intervention. In the same way, if we the one praising also says "God bless it", there will not be doubts that the admiration was truthful. Bacon had already warned us in one of his works: "pessimum genus inimicorum laudatium" [9] (Bacon, F. 1974, 37). There is a prayer in the Isle of Skype (Hebrides) to avoid the evil eye in praising:

[9] The worst enemies are those who praise.

Let God bless my eye,
And my eye will bless all I see;
I will bless my neighbor
And my neighbor will bless me
(Dundes, A. 1992, 268)

It looks like if humanity has got used to lying within society to such an extent that tends to distrust even from those individuals who show true admiration. Now, we should think about what the real problem is. On the one hand, we can consider ourselves as selfish, incapable of wishing the best to our fellows if we are not able to enjoy it too. On the other, we can talk of insecurity. Be that as it may it looks like the evil eye tradition (under whatever the name we want to call it) is going to continue to be part of our lives now and in the future, because we can be sceptic about all the beliefs and religions, but envy is a real fact.

2. Christianity and Fascination

Among those prayers which were still in use by the beginning of the twentieth century, we find the following of Scottish origin:

> In the door of the city of Heaven, Christ gave three calls full just; seven paters in the name of the Virgin, and say 'Whoso have laid on thee the eye may it return on themselves or on their children or on their substance; but thou! May'st thou be full of health in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost'.
> *Old Scottish saying* (Cameron, I. 1928, 64).

This charm could be considered as a Christian prayer, until we realize that it includes the idea of returning the evil eye. Although there are mentions to the evil eye in the Bible, the fact of wishing evil to return to the sender is completely against the Christian dogma.

We can observe how Christian elements are almost omnipresent in charms, rites and amulets against the evil eye. In fact, the origin of the evil eye is, as I said before, supposed to be in a deadly sin: envy. F. Leech makes a clear reference to this in his *Leech's Guide and Directory of the Isle of Man* by saying that "the general notion is, that when someone has longing for something in another's possession and breaks the tenth commandment by coveting it, he is apt to cast an evil eye at it, if he is refused it" (Leech, F. 1861). It is worth noting how "covet" occupies here the place of "envy". Coveting is the longing of others' possessions but without wishing its destruction or creating a feeling of displeasure as it happens with envy. So, we can interpret here envying as a consequence of coveting because it implies egoism. Coveting is, therefore, not so wrong, what is worst is its effect, that is why one of the

Ten Commandments urges us to not covet. By following the Ten Commandments we are not only following the precepts of a religion, but adopting norms of respect towards our fellows.

The relationship established between the evil eye and witches was also a help to introduce Christianity into this superstition. If we follow Kramer and Sprenger's work, *Malleus Malleficarum*, published in 1487, we find that the best way to counteract the charms of a witch is by means of Christian symbols and even exorcism, because witches obtain their powers from the Devil. In *A Highland Chapbook* we can see how the Devil explains to witches how to inflict the evil eye on somebody: "if you bear ill-will to anybody, look on them with open eyes, and pray evil for them in my name, and you will get your heart's desire" (Cameron, I. 1928, 76). As a consequence, taking into account the fine line which separates witchcraft and the evil eye, those Christian methods against witches are also efficacious against overlooking.

It is clear that the presence of the evil eye tradition dates back to much earlier than the advent of Christianity. So, the now most popular religion had the difficult mission of erasing the existing traditions which they considered pagan. But, taking into account that these customs had been among these people since a very long time, this mission was too difficult. Before this situation there were three possible solutions: forgetting this tough job, imposing the new faith as the only true religion or disguising those existing traditions. Although the second possibility was chosen in many occasions, the third was far more successful. By the year 597, Pope Gregory, The Great, sent to England a group of monks under the supervision of Saint Agustine. As Bede says, Saint Agustine received some pieces of advice directly from

the Pope about how he should do his Christianizing labour, among which he highlighted:

> Bishop Augustine, we wish you to inform him that we have been given careful thought to the affairs of the English, and have come to the conclusion that the temples of the idols among that people should on no account be destroyed. The idols are to be destroyed, but the temple themselves are to be aspersed with holy water, altars set up in them, and relics deposited there. For if these temples are well-built, they must be purified from the worship of demons and dedicated to the service of the true God. In this way, we hope that the people, seeing that their temples are not destroyed, may abandon their errors and, flocking more readily to their accustomed resorts, may come to know and adore the true God. And since they have a custom of sacrificing many oxen to demons, let some other solemnity be substituted in its place, such as a day of Dedication or the Festivals of the holy martyrs whose relics are enshrined there. On such occasions they might well construct shelters of boughs for themselves around the churches that were once temples, and celebrate the solemnity with devout feasting. They are no longer to sacrifice beasts to the Devil, but they may kill them for food to the praise of God, and give thanks to the Given of all gifts for the plenty they enjoy. Of the people are allowed some worldly pleasures in this way, they will more readily come to desire the joys of the spirit. For it is certainly impossible to eradicate all errors from obstinate minds at one stroke, and whoever wishes to climb to a mountain top climbs gradually step by step, and not in one leap (Bede, 1990, chapter 30).

For Pope Gregory the fact that the British were not yet Christianized was incomprehensible because they were too handsome to be pagan. This is reflected in what he said, according to Bede, when he found British boys for sale in Rome:

> "Alas!', said Gregory with heart-felt sigh: 'how sad that such handsome folk are still in the grasp of the Author of Darkness, and that faces of such beauty conceal minds ignorant of God's grace!" (Owen, G. R. 1981, 126)

The process of Christianizing the British Isles was not an easy task even after the religion had been officially instituted. Many cleargymen had the difficult task of facing that the new Christians were still very close to their ancient pagan practices. Bernard of Clairvaux (12th century) also had problems with the Irish once they had supposedly already been Christianized:

> When began to administer his office, the man of God understood that he had been sent not to men but to beasts. Never before had he known the like, in whatever depth of barbarism; never had he found men so shameless in regard of morals, so dead in regard of rites, so stubborn in regard of discipline, so unclean in regard of life. They were Christians in name, in fact pagans (Hourihane, C. 2001, 316)

If we pay attention to the beliefs and traditions preserved in the British Isles, we can even say that the process of Christianization has not been fulfilled yet. There are so many traditions that have been transformed, as we may deduce from Pope Gregory's letter, but not erased. This means that the old belief and the new religion are mixed in such a way that, if not informed about the real origin, many cannot discern what belongs to one or to the other. As a consequence, the evil eye tradition has also got involved in this mixture becoming Christian elements very frequent when counteracting or preventing the effects of fascination. In fact, that was a way of

avoiding rebellion among those reticent to accept the new faith. The pagans were allowed to use amulets against the evil eye as long as they were Christian, such as is the case of crosses or saints' images. Due to this, even nowadays pendants with these images are widely used as amulets by religious and non-religious people. They were also permitted to use herbs to counteract the effects of evil eye because God provided herbs with curative powers but "nor shall any man enchant a herb with magic, but shall bless it with God's words, and so eat it" as Ælfric states in his homily on the passion of Saint Bartholomew by the end of the tenth century (Meaney, A. L. 1981, 15).

The most common method to avert the evil eye all throughout the British Isles is by saying "God bless it" when praising and thus dissipating all the possible evil intentions. As the supreme agent of blessing, God has the power to expel any bad wish from our sinful mouths and glances. Moreover, as evil eye is related to envy and envy is a deadly sin, so, who better than God to help us? In other occasions, we find Virgin Mary, Saint Brigit and Saint Columba. We also find reference to many Christian representatives in the same charm, for example this one recited in Wales when counteracting the effects of the evil eye by the employment of a crystal ball (which use would be explained in chapter 11), mixing a clearly pagan element with Christianity:

> O thou stone of Might and Right,
> Let me dip thee in the water –
> In the water of pure spring or of wave,
> In the name of St. David,
> In the name of the twelve Apostles,
> In the name of the Holy Trinity,
> And of Michael and the all the angels,
> In the name of Christ and Mary His mother!

> Blessing on the clear shinning stone!
> Blessings on the clear pure water!
> A healing of all bodily ills
> On man and beast alike. (Trevelyam, M. 1973, 231).

2.1 God, Jesus and Trinity

Apart from the handy "God bless it", we find invocations to God in many other charms and remedies against the evil eye. In Ireland, one can counteract the effects of evil eye by getting the evil eye beholder to spit on the victim three times in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost (Wood-Martin, W. G. 1902, 195). In Scotland, you can get rid of the evil eye by putting a shilling and a sovereign in some water and sprinkling it over the affected in name of the Trinity (Radford, E. & Radford, M. A. 1995, 116). Another example, now from England, is found in Somersetshire, in this case also including biblical references. Here it is illustrated how to cure an ill-wished cow by taking a handful of salt on your right hand and strewing it over the back of the cow from head to tail and from tail to head while saying:

> as thy servant Elisa healed the waters of Jericho by casting salt therein, so I hope to heal this my beast, in the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. Amen (Thompson, C. J. S. 1995, 72)

But the naming of Trinity has a more complex meaning than that of being the major representation of Christianity. It also symbolizes a number: three. Number three is considered a magic number for many cultures, among which we find Celts

and Anglo-Saxons, as it will be explained later on. Therefore, having a new religion (that is, Christianity) which also has as major representative a triad means a way of easing its integration. Changing the names of the deities was a minor problem. Sometimes we can find references to previous deities in these charms as we can notice in some examples included in this thesis.

2.2 Virgin Mary and Saint Brigit

The appearance of Virgin Mary and Saint Brigit in charms and invocations to prevent or work against the power of the evil eye is very frequent too. They occupy the place of previous female pagan deities which were Christianized under the form of these close equivalents. This is more evident in the case of Saint Brigit, because the cult of Virgin Mary has achieved enough popularity to gain a place on her own within popular tradition. Nevertheless, both figures still keep the previous pagan connotations.

Saint Brigit was originally a Celtic goddess whose feast was held during Imbolg, 1st February. Brigit was considered as the goddess of fire, fertility and, among others, healing. Somehow, we can say that this celebration still exists, although now under a Christian name: Candlemass, on 2nd February. This Christian celebration stands for the ritual of purification of Virgin Mary, as 2nd February turned out to be forty days after the birth of Jesus Christ. Traditionally, forty days after giving birth was when a woman had to attempt the purification ceremony as she was considered impure after having conceived. This coincidence of dates results in an identification of Brigit with Virgin Mary (Torrado Cespón, M. 2008, 165). So,

although what we are really celebrating under the fire symbolism present during this Christian celebration is an old Celtic ritual, both Christians and pagan were pleased with the adaptation.

In the Hebrides it was usual to recite the genealogy of Saint Brigit to clear the air of evil spirits. In this genealogy we find the following words:

> Each day and each night that I recall the genealogy of Brigid
> I shall not be killed
> I shall not be wounded
> I shall not be struck with the Evil Eye (Mackay, R. C. 1997)

Thus, Saint Brigit appears directly involved in the evil eye belief as a reminiscence of her previous power as goddess of fertility. Being the concept of fertility contrary to the destructive nature of fascination, the identification of the goddess Brigit as a good protection against it was commonsensical.

In *Carmina Gadelica*, a recompilation of Scottish incantations by Alexander Carmichael, we find various charms where both Virgin Mary and Saint Brigit appear, although always with some reference to God or Trinity. For example:

> The spell the great white Mary sent
> To Bride (Saint Brigit) the lovely fair,
> For sea, for land, for water, and for whithering glance,
> For teeth of wolf, for testicle of wolf.
> Whoso laid on thee the eye
> May it oppress himself,
> May it oppress his house,
> May it oppress his flocks.
> Let me subdue the eye,
> Let me avert the eye,
> The three complete tongues of fullness,
> In the arteries of the heart,
> In the vitals of the navel

> From the bosom of Father,
> From the bosom of Son,
> From the bosom of Holy Spirit.[10]

In Ireland it is also said that Virgin Mary gave Saint Brigit a charm to counteract the evil eye caused by fairies or human beings. This runs as follows:

> If a fairy have overlooked thee or a man or a woman, there are three in Heaven greater than they who will cast all evil from thee and to the seven angels[11] of God and they will watch over that. Amen (Daniels, C, & Stevans, C.M. 2003, 1269)

Apart from the charms naming Brigit, we also find the called "cross of Saint Brigit" (Fig. 1) which acts as a protective device. This cross used to be placed above the front door of the house and was renewed every year on the saint's festivity.

Figure 1 Saint Brigit's Cross. Photograph by Milagros Torrado Cespón

Brigit is also found under other shape. The well-known Sheela-na-Gig[12], the grotesque female figure found at the entrance of dwellings and churches which

[10] Ob a chuir Moire mhor-gheal / Gu Bride mhin-gheal, / air muir, air tir, air li, 's rachd fharmaid, / air fiacail coin-ghiorr, 's air siadha coinghearr. / Ge be co leag ort an t-suil, /gun much i air fein, / gun much i air a thur, / gum much i air a spreidh. / clomhadh mis an t-suil, / somhadh mis an t-suil, / tri teanga turn an iomlan, / am feithean a chrishe, / an eibhlean imileig. / A uchd Athar, / a uchd Mic, / a uchd Spioraid Naoimh.

[11] The archangels.

[12] The role of the Sheela-na-Gig is explained in chapter 5.

shows her vulva is sometimes identified as the goddess Brigit. This is another evidence of the non-Christian provenience of the Saint Brigit.

The case of Virgin Mary is different. We cannot surely state who the deity she replaced was. As we can observe, she appears related to Saint Brigit very frequently, probably as an attempt to introduce the Celtic goddess in a Christian context. We have to take into account that, after all, the figure of Virgin Mary is relatively new in comparison with the antiquity of the pagan gods in the British Isles. So, introducing her interacting together with another female counterpart was an almost imperceptible but very efficacious trick of the Christians.

2.3 Saint Columba

The case of saint Columba is different from that of saint Brigit, because, in this case, he is not occupying the place of a previous pagan deity. Saint Columba was a 6th century Irish missionary monk held in great esteem by both Irish and Scottish people. In this case we are really facing a clearly Christian element which is not identified with any previous Celtic cult. It was he who introduced Christianity among

Figure 2 Nineteenth century representation of Columba banging on the gate of Pictish king Bridei I. htpp://www.wikipedia.org

the Picts (Fig. 2). As a man of God, it is not surprising finding him in charms to counteract the evil eye, especially among the Scottish folk. He was considered as the safeguard of cattle, so the wish "May Columba protect your cattle for you" was commonly heard (Tulloch, W.W. 1907, 162).

Saint John's wort, a plant which is used to counteract the effects of the evil eye, is also known as the "armpit of Columba", due to the admiration the saint showed towards John the Baptist. We can also relate him to Midsummer celebration because the second Thursday of June was devoted to him and, if we follow the previous calendar, his commemorative day is placed near the summer solstice[13]. As a consequence, all Thursdays of the year became considered as propitious. Due to this, it was believed that on Thursdays the evil eye beholders lose their malefic powers (Carmichael, A. 1992, 383). The only exception is if Beltane (1st May) falls on a Thursday:

> When the Wednesday is Hallowmas
> Restless are the men of the universe;
> But woe the mother of the foolish son
> When Thursday is the Beltane (Carmichael, A. 2007, 166)[14]

Beltane bears a special significance for the evil eye, because those with an evil eye are more powerful during this day. The importance of Beltane is described in chapter 6.

Saint Columba always appears together with the other Christian references in anti evil eye incantations. For example, in a Scottish charm that involves the pagan act of knotting, in this case, a red thread:

[13] The Gregorian calendar was introduced in Britain in 1752. This meant a difference of thirteen days with the previous system.
[14] 'D uair is Ciadaoineach an t-Samahain / is iarganach fir an domhain, /ach's meirg is mathair dh'an mhac bhaoth / 'D uair is Daorn dh' an Bhealltain.

An eye covered thee,
A mouth spoke thee,
A heart envied thee,
A mind desired thee.
Four made thy cross:
Man and wife,
Youth and maid;
Three will I send to thwart them:
Father,
Son,
Spirit Holy,
I appeal to Mary,
Aidful Mother of men;
I appeal to Bride,
Foster-mother of Christ omnipotent;
I appeal Columba,
Apostle of shore and sea;
And I appeal to heaven,
To all saints and angels that be above:
If it be a man that has done thee harm,
With evil eye,
With evil wish,
With evil passion,
Mayst thou cast off each ill,
Every malignity,
Every malice,
Every harassment,
And mayst thou be well forever,
While this thread
Goes round thee,
In honour of God and of Jesus,

> And of the Spirit of balm everlasting[15]
> (Carmichael, A. 1900 vol II, 48-49)

In the Isle of Man, Saint Columba was also thought to protect from the action of fairies and the evil influences of the night. They used to recite the following:

> Peace of God and peace of man. Peace of God on Columb Killey. On each window, on each door. On each hole admitting moonlight. On the four corners of the house. On the place of my rest and the peace of God on myself![16]

2.4 Other Christian Elements

As they are all holy, any Christian symbol is regarded as a good general protection. However, no all the named "Christian symbols" are of Christian origin. The use of crosses to counteract the evil eye can have many interpretations. Let us see the Christian use of it in this section. Being it, in this case, a symbol of Christ, it is considered very effective as protection against the Devil's deeds and, being the evil eye considered by many as a devilish action, it is also a good protective device against fascination. We can observe various instances where crosses are employed in connection with fascination, but it is difficult to discern if the use is Christian or

[15] Ghurnaich suil thu, / thurmaich bial thu, / runaich eridh thu. / Ceathrar a rinn du-sa trasd, / fear agus bean, / mac agus murn; / triuir cniream riu ga'n easg, / Athair /Mac, / Spiorad Numh. / Cuiream fianuis chon Moire, / Mathair-chobhair an t-sluaigh, / cuiream fianuis chon Bride, / muime Chriosda nam buadh, /cuiream fianuis chon Chaluim, / ostal oirthir us chuain, / 's cuiream fianuis chon flathas, / chon gach naoimh us gach aingil tha shuas. / Ma's fear a rinn do lochd, / le droch shuil, /le droch run, / le droch ruam. / Gun tilg thu diot gach olc, / gach mug, / gach gnug, /gach gruam, / 's gu'm bith thu gu math gu brath, / ri linn an snathle seo / dhol a d'dhail mu'n cuart, / an onair De agus Ios, /agus Spioraid ioic bhi-bhuain.

[16] Shee Yee as shee ghooinney. Shee Yee er Columb Killey. Er dagh uinnag, er dagh ghorrys. Er dagh howl goaill stiagh yn Re-hollys. Er kiare corneillyn y thie. Er y royal ta mee my lhie, as shee Yee orrym-pene! (Craine, D. 2002, 20).

pagan. The symbol of the cross is employed as part of an Irish method to know if somebody is affected by the evil eye. In this, one yawning, makes the sign of the cross on the forehead of the person which can be affected. If the other yawns in return, the action of the evil eye can be assured (Jones, L. C. 1992, 159). In an Oxfordshire village (England), there was a case in the second half of the nineteenth century where a cross made of straw was placed over the doorway, so "no unholy thing can enter in", to cure a bewitched lady (Simpson, J. & Westwood, J. 2006, 280). The fact of placing a cross over a doorway reminds us of horseshoes, which are frequently found in this position. The use of crosses against the evil eye can also be found in literature. It appears in *The Broad Highway* (1910), chapter 10, by the English writer Jeffrey Farnol, where the main character is accused of possessing the evil eye after defeating a stronger man:

> "... I've heerd o'folk sellin' themselves to the devil afore now, I've likewise heerd o'the 'Evil Eye' afore now, - ah! An' knows one when I sees it".
> "Nonsense!" said I sternly, "nonsense" This talk of ghosts and devils is sheer folly. I am a man, like the rest of you, and could not wish you ill. – even if I would come, let us all shake hands, and forget this folly!", and I extended my hand to Old Amos.
> He glanced from it to my face, and immediately, lowering his eyes, shook his head.
> "Tis the Evil Eye!", said he, and drew a cross upon the floor with his stick, "the Evil Eye!"

Another common protection in Ireland is the use of fragments of the gospels as protection. In this case, they are worn in a roll and tied to the neck (Gregory, L. 1992, 99). This same method is widely used in Galicia, either alone or combined

with more Christian elements: a small piece of a priest chasuble and a little fragment of an altar. These three objects are placed in a small sack known as a "bolsiña dos atavíos" and sewed or tied to one's clothes. In the northern counties of England, was also recorded the use of a copy of the apocryphal letter Christ sent to Abgarus, king of Edessa together with holed stone or snakestone (Henderson, W. 1879, 194). Biblical texts read aloud were also used to get rid of the evil eye influence. Again, in Ireland, the priest was asked to read the Holy Spirit mass over the affected person as a cure (Gregory, L. 1992, 83). This is again related to the possible devilish origin of the evil eye.

In Somerset (England), when a cow is ill due to incantation, a complicated charm is performed. We can observe clearly the mixture between pagan and Christian elements:

> Cut a bit of hair from between the ears, a bit from behind each shoulder, and a bit from the stump of the tail, a little blood, a teaspoonful of gunpowder, and put the whole into a small bladder, and tie the top of it; then get some green ashen wood, and make a fire, and set it on the brand irons, and take the bladder into your right hand, and say those words: "I confine all Evil, all Enemies of mine and my cattle into the fire for ever, never to hurt me or mine any more for ever: in the Name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. Amen." Then drop it into the fire, and let it burn out. Read the first thirteen verses of the 28th chapter of Duteronomy[17] and no more every morning before you go to see your cattle (Elworthy, F.T. 1895).

[17] 1.And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth:
2.And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God.
3.Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field.

The coexistence of Christianity and paganism shows how the society does not perceive any of the two traditions as alien. Adaptation is always better than obligation.

4.Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep.
5.Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store.
6.Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out
7.The Lord shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face: they shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways.
8.The Lord shall command the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto; and he shall bless thee in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.
9.The Lord shall establish thee an holy people unto himself, as he hath sworn unto thee, if thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, and walk in his ways.
10.And all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the Lord; and they shall be afraid of thee.
11.And the Lord shall make thee plenteous in goods, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy ground, in the land which the Lord sware unto thy fathers to give thee.
12.The Lord shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow.
13.And the Lord shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the Lord thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do them

Fascinology in the Society and Literature of the British Isles

Milagros Torrado Cespón

3. Who Casts the Evil Eye and What to Do against Them. Special Characters to Take into Account

The evil eye may be casted by animals, people or even the sun acting as an irate god. But now, I am going to deal with people. Animals and the sun itself would be seen in chapters 4 and 15 respectively. Although anybody can have the power of the evil eye, there are some people who are more prone to be attributed with its possession. Peculiarities in eyes, such as different or very dark colour, strabismus, brows meeting in the forehead or the lack of one eye; physical characteristics, such deformities or just lack of attractiveness according to the beauty cannon of the time can also identify who can cast the evil eye. Sometimes, being old was enough to have the power of fascination, especially if we talk about women, because that meant that they are sterile and have lost their beauty. For example, in Kerry (Ireland), there was an old woman who was feared by the young girls for her evil eye. As the evil eye is believed to be stronger in the morning, they used to go out after sunset for water to avoid her morning sight (Gifford, E. S. 1958, 51). The glance of a barren woman to a newborn is especially feared because of the strong feeling of envy she is almost certainly having. But also people of normal appearance were believed to have this power which sometimes was held involuntary, as it was seen in some previous examples, because they are unconscious victims of envy. Anybody from any status could be blamed. The Scottish folk summarized those who were more likely to cast the evil eye in the following charms, where, although we find the evil eye attributed to different people from both sexes, women seems to have special weight. It is also

interesting noting that in the second example, even the person reciting the charm is included as a possible evil eye beholder:

> I make for thee charm
> To check the evil eye;
> Against the nine paths,
> Against the nine tumults,
> Against the nine crafty wiles,
> Against nine slender women of faery;
> Against the eye of bachelor,
> Against the eye of old main,
> Against the eye of old man,
> Against the eye of old woman.
> If it be eye of man.
> May it flare like pitch,
> If it be eye of woman,
> May she want her breast.
> Flooding be to her water
> And chilling be to her blood,
> To her cattle, to her sheep,
> To her people, to her wealth (Carmichael, A. 1992, 390-391).

Or:

> Against small eye, against large eye,
> Against the eye of swift voracious women,
> Against the eye of swift rapacious women,
> Against the eye of swift draggling women.
> Against mine own eye,
> Against thine own eye,
> Against the eye of the grey man
> Who came yesterday to the door (Carmichael, A. 1992, 385)

Taking into account this universality, in this section I am going to take a look at certain individuals that bear a kind of mystical aura. That is the case of witches, condemned because of their supposed relationship with the Devil; gypsies, the eternal foreigners due to their nomadic lifestyle; and to a creature which belongs to the supernatural world: the fairy. The analysis of these three representative characters would show how fact and fiction mix up to such a point that they cannot be always discerned. In the case of witches and fairies we cannot always assure if we are talking about fascination or about the special powers they have. Nevertheless, those mechanisms frequently used to counteract the effects of the evil eye are extrapolated to fight the action of these two beings. Thus, it is not strange finding elements clearly related to witches as it is the case of "witch balls" and "witch bottles" (which are analysed in this chapter) as amulets or even cures against the action of an evil eye, but not necessarily from that of a witch.

3.1 Witches

There are two main types of witches: black witches, those who only want to do harm and white witches, those who can perform cures. Some also talk about grey witches, those who can either be evil or good, but this quality is attributed to white witches too. It is interesting how important the role of witches is in the evil eye tradition, to the extent that "bewitch" and "bewitched" are applied to both the action of a witch and the action of an evil eye. Joseph Glanvil (1636-1680), the English philosopher, clergyman and writer, stated that "how overlooking and bewitching are distinguished by this hellish fraternity, I know not" (Dalyell, J.G. 1836, 10). In

Norfolk, they said that those women of dominant personality and Roman nose (that is, a nose with a predominant bridge of a slightly aquiline cast) were possible witches (Thompson, J.C.S. 1995, 289). In Scotland, all witches had in their bodies what was known as the "devil's mark", a pimple of skin which was different from the rest, but which has not a concrete description. In order to prove that its possessor was a witch, one should thrust a pin into the flesh and observe if blood emerged or if the suspected witch felt pain. If neither of these two things happened, she was clearly a witch (Macinlay, J. M. 1993, 149). A supposed Devil's mark was many times a mere excuse to accuse a woman who someone wanted to condemn, sometimes due to matter of envy.

The connection among the Devil, witches and the evil eye has created a vague frontier which cannot be discerned in a clear enough way. The evil eye is said to derive from envy or from the action of the Devil and witches also get their power from him. Therefore, taking into account the closeness between witchcraft and the evil eye, many charms and countercharms are used indistinctly against the evil eye and witches. Sir George Mackenzie tells in *Laws and Customs of Scotland* the following:

> Witches may kill by their looks, which looks being full of venomous spirits, may infect the person whom they look. I know there are those who think all kinds of fascination by the eyes, either an effect of fancy in the person affected, or else think it is a mere illusion of the Devil, who persuades witches that he can bestow upon them the power of killing by looks; whereas others contend that by the received opinion of all historians men have been found to be injured by locks of witches: and why may not witches poison this way as well as the Basilisk doth? (Davidson, T. 1992, 147)

Therefore, as all witches are said to possess the evil eye, such a distinction in the protection and curing of their evil effects is not necessary. This is not something exclusive to the British Isles. For example in Galicia, it is a tradition to gather the "Saint John's herbs" on Midsummer Eve which were later burnt in remedies against the evil eye. In a similar way, in Britain it was customary to gather the flowers of Saint John's wort (Hypericum perforatum) on Midsummer Eve before midnight. These were later used to protect people and houses from the evil spells of witches (Thompson, C. J. S. 1995, 222).

In chapter 2 of *Grisly Grisell* (1893), by the English Charlotte M. Yonge we find a reference to the evil eye of a witch:

> Poor little boy, no one had been accustomed enough to sickly children, or indeed to child at all, to know how to make him happy or even comfortable, and his life had been sad and suffering ever since the blight that had fallen on him, through either the evil eye of Nan the Witch or through his fall into a freezing stream.

We can find examples of witches as possessors of the evil eye in pieces of research, traditions and, even, newspapers. This is the case with The Oxford Times where in July 1894 appeared the following:

> Women as well as men became bitten by the crave for witchfinding; and the little out-of-the-world villages along the romantic Vale of the Red Horse[18] were in a state of great unrest, each native or resident suspecting the other of possessing the dangerous gift of the evil eye (Horn, P. 1984, 181).

[18] South Warwickshire

In the Isle of Man there was a witch known as Caillagh-ny-Gheshag or The Ben Obbee[19] who was much feared because of her evil eye which mainly affected farm animals. She was supposed to have the power of assuming the form of an animal, especially that of a hare (Moore, A.W. 1885). In fact, if a hare crossed your path when you were going to perform any business, it was a witch for sure and bad luck was going to accompany you (Owen, E. 1896, 230). Also in the Isle of Man, it was recorded how a witch, in the form of a hare cast the evil eye on a team of horses when ploughing and they fell dead at once. The owner collected some dust from where the hare had stood (a typical Manx remedy against the evil eye) and threw it over the horses, which came back to life (Moore, A.W. 1891, 95). It is common to attribute this power of transmutation to witches. The usually chosen animals were (or are) hares, cats and toads. These last two are frequently related to the evil eye tradition as is explained in their corresponding sections in this thesis. Another power for witches was that of flying, a power usually attributed to their broomsticks which was actually the action of a hallucinogen. [20]Among the plants they used we find mandrake, jimson weed and black henbane, all of them belonging to the Solanaceae family. But toads were also used for this purpose. There is problem of identification with the word "toad", which can be either a toadstool (in special, the *amanita muscaria*) or an animal (*bufo vulgaris*). In the case of the *amanita muscaria*, it was ingested and the main effect was not that of flying, but rather objects seeming smaller (micropsia) or bigger (macropsia). A good example of these uses are reflected in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), by Lewis Carroll, where the

[19] Fer Obbee and Ben Obbee were the names given in the Isle of Man to male and female charmers respectively. They could do either harm or cures (Moore, A.W. 1891, 78).

[20] Thanks to José María Costa Lago, mycologist and librarian at the Faculty of Philology in the University of Santiago de Compostela, for the information related to plants and mushrooms.

main character becomes either giant or tiny after consuming a mushroom, as it can be seen in chapter 5:

> She had not gone much farther before she came in sight of the house of the March Hare: she thought it must be the right house, because the chimneys were shaped like ears and the roof was thatched with fur. It was so large a house, that she did not like to go nearer till she had nibbled some more of the left hand bit of mushroom, and raised herself to about two feet high.

When a real toad was used, it was decapitated and rubbed into the skin in order for it be impregnated with bufotenine, a hallucinogen which gave them the sensation of flying. The use of these plants and of animals indicates a high level of knowledge of their properties, which were considered as magic by the common people.

Figure 3 Three women accused of witchcraft in Lincoln, known as the "witches of Belvoir", accompanied by their familiars (c. 1619). http://www.thebookofdays.com/moths/march/11.htm

Witches cannot always accomplish their actions on their own and need the help of a being known as "witch's familiar" (fig. 3), a type of demon which also assumed animal form (cats, hare and toads being the most frequent). Their mission was that of bewitching people and animals and protecting their owners. As a reward, witches provided them with all they want, especially blood (Guiley, R. E. 1989, 121).

In East Deringham (Norfolk, England) in 1879 a man was heavily fined for attacking the daughter of an old woman who has sent a familiar in the shape of a walking toad to bewitch him (Horn, P. 1984, 181).

But, why was it especially women who were mostly accused of being witches? The word "witch" was apparently used to name, on several occasions, all those women who knew too much for being women, so, sometimes, it was assumed that they had had sexual intercourse with the Devil to justify their knowledge. It is curious how these characters which are blamed for casting the evil eye were, as it seems, the ones envied due to their extensive knowledge of the world surrounding them. In spite of those treatises such as the *Malleus Maleficarum* which made reference to women as well as men, it was held that women were more prone to fall into demonic temptation because they were weaker (Allen, P. 2002, 597). In *Hanbook of European History 1400-1600* (Brady, T.A.; Oberman, H.A.; & Tracy, J.O. 1995, 620-623) we find the identification of women with witchcraft further explained. One explanation is the fear towards female sexuality, especially of those women who were older and unmarried. If these women were also poor, there was one more reason to consider them as possible lovers of Satan. The explanation for this was economic: the wealthier members of the community refused to help them, so if they were accused of witchcraft they were no longer a burden for their consciences. The other explanation can be found in the role of supposed witches. Those women who performed cures were well accepted until their treatments went wrong and the patient died or worsened significantly. Another traditional job was that of a midwife. In this case, clerics believed that they could provide the Devil with unbaptized children. But if a woman did not fulfil any of these descriptions, she could be suspected of witchcraft if she was quarrelsome or aggressive. Any symptom

of independent behaviour was also seen as a witch characteristic, especially if we talk about religion and sexuality. Almost any woman could fit unto one or more of these possible cases, so if somebody wanted to accuse a concrete woman of being a witch due to personal reasons (for example, envy) it was quite easy.

If a woman with these characteristics was found, she has to be confronted, and, although no always in a violent way, most times showing a disrespectful behaviour towards her. There were also many measures to be taken against witches. W.W. Gill collected those used in the Isle of Man, which are also very frequent in the rest of the British Isles. He enumerates them as follows:

> Saying a good word (a short prayer, or a pious invocation) and keeping a Bible in a conspicuous place. Recourse was had rather to material objects, such as holed stones hung by the bed, the crosh-bollan[21] carried on the person, and home-made crosses of various substances pre-eminently the kieran or mountain ash, fastened up inside the house. It was also repelled by encouraging certain plants, notably the house-leek, to grow outside the building, as near the doors as possible; by the purification of places by fire; by the nailing-up of horseshoes on doors; by killing of a black cock and carrying it bleeding about the farm; by the wearing of amulets supplied or prescribed by another witch, a wise woman or a "fairy doctor"; by carrying a small quantity of salt or ashes in the pocket; by dabbing a spot of soot with the tip of the forefinger on a baby's arm or a cow's udder (Gill, W.W. 1932, 147).

[21] A "T" shaped fish bone found in the *Labrus bergylta*

As it can be appreciated, most of these objects and techniques are equally employed against the evil eye, so the line which separated witchcraft and evil eye becomes even thinner.

3. 1.1 White Witches

Nevertheless, there was a type of witch who was well considered. Those were the white witches, who were visited to counteract the effects of the evil eye among other cures. Those who could perform charms against the evil eye could not transmit their knowledge to anyone, but to somebody of the opposite sex (male to female or female to male), at least in Scotland and in the Isle of Man. As a consequence, we can find both male and female white witches. In Cornwall it also exists the figure of the "pellar" who is also a white witch but who is believed to be more powerful than an ordinary one (Courtney, M. A. 1890, 142).

When the witch rage started with the Inquisition in the beginning of the thirteenth century, white witches were rarely persecuted in England and Scotland, in spite of the fact their actions were also considered illegal. In Ireland, the witch hunting was even milder: there were only eight trials from 1324 and 1711. The attitude towards these women was one of respect, either because of their "supernatural" powers or because of the help they provided doing cures. Nevertheless, they were also feared because they had the power to do wrong if something upset them. There was a witch in the Isle of Man who used to do cures and charms for her neighbours. So she decided to visit them at the beginning of every quarter (when charms were supposed to be more effective) to ask for a payment for her services of protecting their belongings. One neighbour decided not to pay and he

suffered heavy losses in crops and cattle (Craine, D. 2002, 11). Also in the Isle of Man, a white witch was convicted in 1438 for fortune-telling and incantation because she used to cure children who had been affected by violent spirits. The bishop in the trial ordered her to repeat the words she used and, when he heard some unknown words she could not explain (Gill, W.W. 1932, 197) what could have played an important role in her conviction.

According to the traditional folk belief in the British Isles, "witches" were common people who wanted to make use of supernatural power (good or evil) which was, in fact, at the disposition of all (Schmitz, N. 1977, 173). There was not a devilish pact which could upset the Church, so the presence of these witches was well accepted by society in general. Nevertheless, the Church has never looked kindly at those who do cures. One white witch or wise woman I interviewed in Muros (Galicia) a few years ago admitted being a great believer herself, but was sure that priests would condemn her actions. By the beginning of the twentieth century the scholar Edgar MacCulloch wrote that white witches

> are cunning and unprincipled wretches, who trade on the folly and superstition of their ignorant neighbours, and who, doubtless, are often the cause of the malady of the unfortunate cow or pig, which they are afterwards called in the advise about (MacCulloch, E. 1903, 388)

Among these white witches it is worth mentioning two of them: the Irish Biddy Early and the English Cunning Murrell.

Biddy Early was a wise woman who lived in county Clare (Ireland) during the nineteenth century. She performed a wide variety of cures thanks to the power she obtained from a bottle. The origin of this bottle it is uncertain. It is said to have been given to her by a passing stranger (O'Brien, 2005; Schmitz, N. 1977, 172), a

cradle-bound child (O'Brien, 2005), her mother or the fairies (Schmitz, N. 1977, 172). She was believed to have been spending some time living among fairies, from which she learnt how to handle with the problems they could cause to human beings. Fairies used to be very capricious and mischievous and sometimes their actions (stealing cow's milk, for example) were attributed to an evil eye. Lady Gregory collected many of the cures she performed in *Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland*, in 1920. Among them, some counteract the action of the evil eye. For example, this is what Lady Gregory recorded from a native explaining the cure given by Biddy Early to counteract the fascination caused by envious praising:

> I was myself digging potatoes out in that field beyond, and a woman passed by the road, but I heard her say nothing, but a pain came on my head and I fell down, and I had to go to my bed for three weeks. My mother went then to Biddy Early. Did you ever hear of her? And she looked in the blue bottle she had, and she said my name. And she saw me standing before her, and knew all about me and said, "Your daughter was digging potatoes with her husband in the field, and a woman passed by and she said, 'It is as good herself is with a spade as the man'", for I was a young woman at the time. She gave my mother a bottle for me, and I took three drinks of it in the bed, and then I got up as well as I was before (Gregory, 1992, 50).

Here Biddy Early tells the sufferer to take three drinks. Number three, as we will see later on, is an important number due to its symbolism.

Biddy Early was also very much disliked by priests, who were, maybe envious of her healing powers. In Ireland clerics also used to do cures, but in the name of Christianity. In fact there was a priest in her parish who openly manifested

his rejection towards her. On one occasion, she caused his horse to stop and it could not move until he apologized for having offended her (Schmitz, N. 1977, 173). On another occasion, the horse of a priest who intended to make her stop doing her cures fell when they arrived. She told the priest to spit three times on the animal to free it from the evil eye that he himself had put on it (Gregory, 1992, 49-50).

Many other wise women have existed in the British Isles, but also wise men. In fact, in Wales it was believed that if someone was overlooked by a female witch, they were recommended to go to a male conjuror (Howard, M. 2009, 124). In the same way as Biddy Early, there was a man in Essex during the nineteenth century who also used to do all types of cures: Cunning Murrell. Cunning men were the male counterpart of "wise women" or "white witches". Although it is possible hearing or reading the appellative "cunning women" or "wise men", it is far more common the other way round. They are men who have the ability of doing cures and helping their neighbours with everyday matters, from getting rid of the evil eye to find stolen or missing properties. Some also used to have the power of second sight, that is, they could see who was going to die as it happens to Galician "vedoiros". Those people in the British Isles who have this power are said to be the seventh son of a seventh son or daughter. James Murrell or Cunning Murrell was a perfect example of these characteristics. He specialized in witches (black, in this case) whom he defeated by the employment of his well-know iron witch bottles. These witch bottles were cast by the local smith, who was unable to do the first of them until Cunning Murrell recited a charm over the iron (Maple, E. 1960, 38). In a case of evil eye, he put the cuttings of the bewitched person's hair, finger and toe nails into a bottle and then placed it either in the fire of buried under the door (Thompson, C. J. S. 1995, 73). These bottles could make the witches remove their spell or even kill them. In one

occasion, a gypsy woman bewitched a girl and made her bark like a dog and meow like a cat. Cunning Murrell decided to use one of his iron bottles. He placed it into the fire and a woman's voice started begging him to stop from the other side of the door because the burning was causing her a huge pain. However, the bottle exploded and the next morning the gypsy woman was found burnt to death and the girl recovered (Maple, E. 1960, 39).

The figure of Cunning Murrell also had its repercussion in literature. Arthur Morrison, investigated all his writings and wrote, among other texts, a novel entitled *Cunning Murrell* in 1900 which tells the life of the so-called "Devil's master" in a novelistic way. In chapter 9 we find a summary of his powers:

> In all his world his word was gospel, and people trembled before him. Not a thief in Essex who had stolen linen from a hedge or a watch from a drunken man's pocket but would hasten to restore his plunder at the threat of Murrell's subtle sciences, not a man or woman with a bewitched or bedevilled child, or cow, or churn, or horse, but was certain of delivery at the hands of Cunning Murrell.

On the contrary to Biddy Early, who did not accept money, Cunning Murrell used to charge half a crown for his services. Some people are of the opinion that these kind of people should not accept monetary payment for their services, for this reason, nowadays, many of them do not ask for money, but they usually take it in case the client insists on doing so, at least in Galicia and the British Isles.

Other remarkable cunning men were the Harries of Cwrt-y-Cadno (Wales), two medical doctors (father and son, although the father was the most famous) who lived during the nineteenth century. Some people were of the opinion they had got their powers from the Devil, but, in spite of that, many used to ask for their help. The

major source of their knowledge seems to come from a "black book" or "grimoire" which was kept unchained and padlocked. Harris opened it once a year with the help of a friend magician. To do this, they went to a wood and drew a magical circle of protection on the ground (Howard, M. 2009, 86). This type of book was very popular from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. Its original purpose was to conjure and control demons and spirits, who would bring the wizard great wealth and power or enable him to harm or kill his enemies (Guiley, R. E. 1989, 144). The Harries were resorted to solve many different problems, from minor thefts to cases of murder, but also to counteract the evil eye. Once, a woman consulted him for a case of bewitched cattle. Harries told her to buy a brand new knife, whatever the price, and used it to cut a branch of rowan tree he said was growing in the field where they grazed the cows. Then, some hair from the animals' tails was bound around the wood and burned. Thus, the responsibility of having cast the evil eye on the cows was forced to come to her door and apologize. The cows recovered (Howard, M. 2009, 88).

Figure 4 The famous Manx white witch, Nan Wade at the Manx Museum. Photograph by Milagros Torrado Cespón

It is also worth mentioning the Manx white witch known as Nan Wade (fig. 4). She was a reputed herbalist who used her knowledge to recover lost property, cures or treat those affected by the evil eye. Their methods were common to other white witches such as was the case where a man was asked to get a pullet liver and fry it stuck with pins to cure his overlooked sister. When they did so, they heard a

scream outside coming from the witch who had bewitched the child (Morrison, S. 1994, 18).

3.1.2 Cailleach

When we go through books about the folklore of the Gaelic speaking parts of the British Isles, the term "cailleach" appears frequently mentioned. The "Cailleach" or "Hag" is a creature of the Celtic mythology which is sometimes identified as a witch. Nevertheless, she was the goddess of Earth, with a triple aspect: she represented life, fertility and death (McMahon, J. & Roberts, J. 2001, 68). She is related to fascination in Scottish folklore, where those known as the "cailleach of the Samhain" was said to have the evil eye and be able to damage both crops and animals (Mackay, R. C. 1997). Sometimes, when we find the word "hag" we should not identify it with the Cailleach, but as a witch or even a fairy. The figure of the cailleach mingled with that of the witch to the point that folk could not differentiate between them, thus it often received the accusation of bewitching cattle and children. We can see an example of this in the Isle of Man, where the phrase "caillagh ny pishag" is translated as "witch of charms" (Craine, D. 2002, 16). This is obviously a problem of translation. Being the word "cailleach" of clearly Gaelic origin, those who spoke it (namely, Irish, Scottish, Welsh, Cornish and Manx) had to adapt to the closest English equivalent, which came to be "witch".

3.1.3 Witch Bottles and Witch Balls

When counteracting the power of the evil eye of a witch there were two elements which were used either as a protection or as a way of counteracting their actions: witch balls and witch bottles (fig. 5). We have already seen the iron witch bottles used by Cunning Murrell, but they were not exclusive to him. We also find reference to their use in the novel mentioned beforehand about Cunning Murrel, in page 48:

> "Ay, I hear tell." Dove spoke with a more hushed attention. "An 'Master Murr'll, he were hevin' a witch-bottle made with young Steve Lingood."
> "That's so. Well, the wich.bottle's made an' bust an'arl, an' the gal's better; an' they found the witch – so them says as believes in 'em." It was the way among the more intelligent in Hadleigh to add some such saving clause to any reference to the subject of witches.

Figure 5 Post-Medieval witch bottle found in London. Photograph by Museum of London

The first recorded use of witch bottles dates back to somewhere between 1620-1640 and appeared in Joseph Glanvill's *Sadducismus Triumphatus* in 1681. There, an old man told a man whose wife was very ill to fill a bottle with her urine, pins, needles and nails, cork it and set it to fire. The man did so, but he did not cork it well so the incantation did not work, or at least, that was what he was told. Then, the old man told him to bury a new bottle and his wife

recovered good health. After this, a woman from some miles away came crying saying that they had killed her husband

> but at last they understood by her that Husband was a Wizard and had bewitched this man's Wife, and that this counter practice prescribed by the Old Man, which saved the Man's Wife from languishment, was the death of that Wizard that had bewitched her (Merrifield, R. 1955, 199).

The most common contents of these witch bottles were the victim's urine or blood, nails and hairs but also iron nails, pins or thorns. The use of nails is connected with the magical qualities attributed to iron as a protective device against supernatural forces. Iron nails are also employed in another method to counteract the evil eye: sticking them into an animal's heart. This method was used in cases of overlooked animals. The owner roasted the heart of a dead cow, pig or horse which had been killed by a spell stuck with pins to avoid the spread of the evil eye effects or to discover the culprit who will be attracted feeling the fire herself, as it happens when a witch bottle is put into the fire. There exists another parallel with these two methods which also involves iron pins. In this case, an image of the person believed to have cast the evil eye is made and pins stuck in its heart. As before, the culprit will be driven unconsciously to the victim's house feeling the pain and begging for relief. Potatoes and apples could also be used instead of hearts in England. The person who has been overlooked carries one of them in their pocket and thus the culprit feels the pain of the pins. However, it is said that the affected does not feel any relief (Courtney, M. A. 1890, 147).

There were, therefore, two ways of using a witch bottle. When a witch bottle was buried, the witch's spell was cancelled out and she would suffer great

discomfort. If it was thrown into the fire, the charm was broken or the witch killed when it exploded. In those cases where the victim's urine was included, the witch was unable to urinate. In other occasions, they were just hung in chimneys as protective devices (Guiley, R. E. 1989, 367).

The use of witch bottles is still alive in modern circles interested in witchcraft and wica, that is, the updating of traditional witchcraft. The high priest of the Wiccan Church of Thessally in Houma (Louisiana, USA), Monte Plaisance, explains how to make a witch bottle. You need: an empty and cleaned out mayonnaise jar, a red cloth cut into the shape of a heart, some of your own hair clippings, some of your own nail clippings, 13 iron nails, 13 black-headed pins and a cup of sea salt. After performing a ritual to put all these items into the jar, you also need to fill it with your urine and draw a protective pentagram in red on the top of the lid. Then, while you are burying the jar, recite:

> Blessed Mother of the Darkened Moon
> I pray that you grant me this boon.
> A bottle of protection do I bury here,
> To protect me from those both far and near.
> May any curse or magick spell
> Placed on me be dispelled.
> Rebounded on the sender be.
> In accordance with the Law of Three (Plaisance, M. 2001, 91-92)

Although the process presents some differences with the first witch bottles, the essential ingredients are kept.

Less popular than witch bottles are the known as witch boxes. They were used across Britain to protect the house from the evil deeds of witches, especially

during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The typical contents of these boxes were different from those of witch bottles. They contained herbs which could be seen thanks to their glass front (Alexander, M. 2002, 223).

Another typical protection was the witch ball. Witch balls were crystal spheres thought to attract the malefic glance of the evil eye possessors. The mechanism is the same used in other amulets such as bright adornments (precious or semi-precious stones, silver, and gold), knots or phallic symbols. All these devices have the aim of distracting the evil eye from its main objective (the person or animal) and make it focus on them. Witch balls are usually blue or green, or any other bright colour. They were very popular in England from the eighteenth century onwards when they were often seen hanging in windows (Guiley, R. E. 1989, 367). There was other type of ball made of plain glass and filled with bright knotted threads which was used for the same purpose (Roud, S. & Simpson, J. 2000). Witch balls are still present in our homes every year without noticing, because now we call them Christmas balls.

3.2 Gypsies

The nomad folk named as gypsies first entered Britain in 1505, as it was reflected in the accounts of the Lord High Treasurer of Scotland: "Item, the xxii day of Aprile, to the Egiptians, be the Kingis command, x Franch crounis" (Frazer, A. 2003, 111). The appellative "Egiptians" makes reference to the extended belief that this race came from Egypt, in spite of the fact they called themselves "Romany". They have been thought as possessors of the evil eye since they first entered the

British Isles. This accusation, which still persists nowadays, can be seen as a reflection of the usual fear towards strangers. Generally all over the worlds, when a foreigner enters a settlement all the misfortunes are attributed to him. In the case of gypsies, taking into account their itinerant nature, they are always considered as foreigners, and, therefore always feared. This is still a general belief in nowadays society, as the English writer Cyril Cook reflects this in novel *The Chandlers Win Through* (2007), chapter 6:

> "Well, you looked a little unsure."
> "Not about the tree; about the thirty caravans. You see, my love, the sight of one gypsy caravan going through a country village is enough for the inhabitants to lock everything lockable, turn the children's face to the wall to prevent them receiving the evil eye, and to produce a sigh of relief once they're gone"

The English preacher and researcher George Borrow also corroborates this belief when he says that the Gypsies in England were accused of causing disease among cattle (Borrow, G. 1846, 11). When a child fell ill, the gypsies were blamed as it was the case recorded in Carmarthenshire (Wales), around 1860, when a woman recurred to a cunning man who told her that her daughter had been bewitched by the gypsies. In order to cure her, he wrote secretly the words "Abracadabra. Sickness depart from me" and tied it with a thread. Then, he asked the mother to put the thread around the girl's neck, letting the piece of paper lay on her chest. At midnight the girl started feeling great pain and, suddenly, she recovered completely (Davies, J. C. 1911, 232). Before this happening, in 1699, a gypsy woman was brought to trial in London accused of theft, but one of the men present there also charged her for

having bewitched his horse[22], maybe to add further strength to the accusation and thus assuring her a penalty.

On other occasions, gypsies were accused of pretending to be healers only to obtain money. An example of this was recorded in Cornwall in 1927, when a gypsy woman was convicted under the charge of having obtained £500 from a man whom she made believe he was the victim of an evil eye (Thompson, C. J. S. 1995, 288, 289). But in other occasions, the advice of gypsies was taken into account, as was the case in the Fen district, in the east coast of England. Here, by the mid twentieth century a farmer consulted and paid a gypsy to find out who had inflected the evil eye over his wife. She told him that she was a woman with the "mark of the golden louse" on her arm. They found the woman, and the farmer's wife stopped feeling unwell. The culprit died shortly after this happening (Gifford, E. S. 1958, 101). Other times, their remedies were well considered. In Dorchester in 1884 a woman was cured by a gypsy who told her that the curse of the evil eye was the cause of her long-term illness. She, the gypsy, offered her a cure for a little money which consisted in placing certain flowers outside the house. When the flowers withered, she was cured (Udal, J. S. 1989, 206). As in many other charms, the fact that the charm requires a certain days to be fulfilled leaves the organism of the affected person more time to heal with its own defences.

Nevertheless, the gypsies were also afraid of the action of the evil eye and had their own methods of protection and counteracting. They also have the same attitude to witches which was traditionally in the British Isles: witches, although dangerous and powerful, were not the Devil's servants, but extremely gifted sorcerers (Dunwich, G. 2002, 93). In spite of this, gypsies were persecuted during the

[22] The Proceedings of the Old Bailey, reference: t16991213a-2.

Renaissance accused of practising witchcraft. The rejection towards this folk was such in England that it was unlawful to be a gypsy from 1530 to 1784 (Guiley, R. E. 1989, 146).

But gypsies also share some point in common with the inhabitants of the British Isles. As well as them, they used to tie a red thread or *thelolidori* around a newborn's ankle or wrists as a protective device against the evil eye (Hancock, I.F. 2005, 74). Other common amulets among them were the *Parik-tils* or blessing holders, which consisted in small drawstring bags which contained object such as acorns, coins, feathers, herbs, stones and pieces of paper with spells or words of wisdom (Webster, R. 2010, 32).

The methods to get rid of the influence of the evil eye also share some elements with those used in the British Isles. We find an example performed by a shuvani or gypsy wise woman in Cornwall. In this case, an overlooked 14-year-old girl was told to remove her clothes and lie on the ground with her head to the east. The shuvani, while walking clockwise around, said this charm:

> Evil eyes see thee,
> Like this water may they perish!
> Sickness depart!
> Go from thy head,
> From thy breast,
> From thy belly,
> From thy feet,
> From thy hands.
> May they go hence
> Into the evil eye!

At the end of each line, she filled her mouth with a little salted water she had in a bottle and then allowed it to trickle out of her mouth over the parts mentioned (Buckland, R. 2010, 136-137).

Another charm, in this case to avoid the evil eye falling on new bought pigs, reminds us of the Manx methods against the same: both gypsies and Manx use dust as a protective device. The gypsies would mix some charcoal dust with the pigs' food and say:

> Do not let the Nivasi[23]
> Eat thy food,
> Evil eyes see thee,
> And they here shall perish,
> Then do thou eat them![24] (Leland, C.1891).

Gypsies due to their nomadic nature had been in contact with many cultures but, in spite of this, they have kept their own traditions. Therefore, those elements related to the evil eye among gypsies which are common with those in the British Isles can be considered to come from a common belief and, as a consequence, a common root.

3.3 Fairies

The word "fairy" derives from Latin *fata*, and reached English through Old French *faerie*. One of the most common names they receive is that of "little people" or "little folk". The actions of fairies were sometimes confused with those of witches

[23] Type of water fairy.
[24] Nivaseske ná muká, /The çál t're çábená! / Miseç yákhá tut díkhen, / The yon káthe mudáren, /Tu atunci çábá len!"

and, therefore, identified with the power of the evil eye. Amulets such as the horseshoe were used to keep fairies away from cattle as well as against the evil eye. The Manx folk actually thought that they could be considered as witches because "these evil spirits called "Feyry" appear to have been what are otherwise known as witches" (Gill, W.W. 1932, 197). They also thought that they were falling angels who Satan had expelled from Heaven and were sometimes known as "The children of pride" (Cloan ny morun) (Cashen, W. 2005, 45) a common belief also present in the rest of the British Isles (Guiley, R. E. 1989, 117). Taking this into account, it seems strange that the Manx have such high esteem towards fairies nowadays. There is a bridge in the south of the island which is full of petitions and presents for the fairies which people leave there for them (fig. 6). There are more bridges of this kind around the Isle of Man, but this one is relatively new (twentieth century), because the previous one was not well communicated and people felt the need of having another. The tradition says that you must greet the fairies when you pass over the bridge, otherwise, they will punish you.

Figure 6 Fairy Bridge full of presents and petitions for the fairies. Photograph by Milagros Torrado Cespón

In Ireland they are believed to have the power of fascination as the Irish writer Oisín McGann told me in an interview:

> But in Irish culture, there is also a strong thread of belief in a faerie race, a magical, musical folk who come from a land where time does not pass, so you don't grow old. The people of this world had a range of unearthly powers, including the ability to cast curses.

In those cases in which a baby was ill it was said that it was either a victim of the evil eye or a "changeling", that is, it has been taken away by a fairy and replaced by her own. Although a changeling is not the same as the effect of the evil eye it is related to it by envy. Those fairies that steal healthy children and leave their ill-ones instead are envious of the human strong offspring. In order to protect them from this evil action, the sap of ash tree was given to newborns (Thompson, C. J. S. 1995, 19), baptizing them was also equally efficacious (Thompson, C.J.S: 1995, 28), these two methods are again frequently used to prevent the evil eye. In the Isle of Man, knowing the allergy fairies had towards iron, the tongs or the tongs and poker forming a cross, were put on the cradle before the child had been baptized to prevent changeling. When parents suspected that their baby had been changed seeing it suddenly ill, the following was recommended in the Western Highlands:

> Place the changeling on the beach below high-water mark when the tide is out, paying no heed to its screams, and the fairies, rather than allow their offspring to be drowned by the rising waters, will convey it away and restore the child they have stolen. The sign that this has been done is the cessation of the child's cries (Thompson, C. J. S. 1995, 18-19).

It is interesting how a case of challenging was told in the Isle of Man, where the fairy was actually seen:

> A woman who was shearing (reaping) on the farm of Ballagilley had left her baby on the ground close to the

> hedge. While the work was going on, one of the other reapers, who had stopped for a moment to straighten his back, saw a little Red Woman come to the child and pick it up, leaving another baby in its place. She then carried the woman's baby away with her. The one she had left behind set up such a piercing howl that everybody stopped working to look, and the mother dropped her reaping-hook to run to it, thinking it was her own. But the man held her back, saying, 'Wait now, till we see what'll happen.' They all stood watching, and the child kept on screaming. In a minute or two the fairy woman came hurrying back down the field from somewhere they couldn't see –she must have come through the (stone) hedge – with the right baby in her arms, laid it down where she had found it, and disappeared through the hedge again with her own child (Gill, W.W. 2002, 29)

Fairies were also suspected of stealing milk from cows. By the beginning of the 20th century it was recorded in the Isle of Skye that a fairy in the shape of a woman with long hair used to steal milk in the farm of Scorybreck (MacCulloch, M. J. 1922, 207). They were also thought to be the responsible of "elf-shot", a malady which was transmitted to cattle by means of a dart of fairy origin. This was thought when a flint arrow was found near the cow's house and one of the animals was ill.

Within the extensive family which comprehends fairies we find other beings of similar characteristics such as pixies. Although pixies are not fairies but a small human-like magic being with pointed ears and pointed hat, it has become a synonym of fairy. We can see an example in Charles Kingsley's *Westward Ho!* (1855), chapter 1:

> He devoutly believed in fairies, whom he called pixies; and held that they changed babies, and made the mushroom rings on the downs to dance in.

The scholar Frederick Thomas Elworthy tells us about the power of this small being which can be similar to the effects of the evil eye: "people are often said to be Pixy-led, when in the dark they lose their way" (Elworthy, F.T. 1895). Therefore, to be pixie-led became a synonym of getting lost or confused, as we can see in *Adam and Eve* (1880), chapter 5, from the English Louisa Parr:

> Well, for certain I thought you'd run home agen, or was pisky-laid or something. Why, wherever had'ee got to? When went away I left 'ee sleeping as fast as a top.

Elworthy recorded a case in which a man believed to have been pixy-led because he was unable to move and also unable to turn his coat inside out as protection. This protective measure against pixies leads us more clearly to the evil eye because it is also a common method of protection against it across the British Isles (Maclagan, R.C. 1902, 44). Another link between the evil eye and pixies is May Eve, when those with the power to overlook and pixies become more powerful (Elworthy, F. T. 1895). Nevertheless, Elworthy equals witches and pixies in their power to overlook leaving the difference even more unclear (Elworthy, F. T. 1903, 17). What is more, in some districts of Ireland and England those stones known as snakestones which are used against the evil eye are also called "pixy grindstones" (Halliday, W.R. 1921, 269, footnote). Again, the frontier between the evil eye and other superstitions, magic powers or whatever the name we want to give them becomes such a fine line that we cannot establish a proper division.

4. Animals with a Role in Fascination

Depending on the culture and religion, some animals have acquired an important status within some societies. Sometimes they were considered the representative of gods, as it happened with cats in ancient Egypt. Others were admired because of their physical characteristics. Taking into account the symbolism of some animals, it is not surprising to find them involved in the evil eye tradition. In this chapter, I am going to explain why some animals deserve a special place within fascination in the British Isles. Some of them also appear in other parts of the globe, showing that the belief in the evil eye shares elements all over the world.

4.1 Boars

We find instances of boar's teeth worn as amulets against the evil eye especially by Anglo-Saxon women (Meaney, A. L. 1981, 134). In Galicia today, they are still considered amulets, although the sense of protection against fascination is now lost. Diodorus, quoting Posidonius, explained that Celts also used to decorated their helmets with boar's teeth (Webster, G. 1986, 118). Both Celts and Anglo-Saxons used to place a protective bronze boar on their helmets (fig. 7) (Alonso Romero, F. 1992, 165). The boar as was also an important animal in Norse

Figure 7 Celtic warrior with a protective boar on his helmet. Gundestrup cauldron. Drawing by Fernando Alonso Romero

mythology. The masculine counterpart of goddess Freya, whose chariot was driven by cats, was the god Frey, a sun god who has the boar as totem animal. Lugh, the Celtic sun god who killed Balor of the evil eye[25], was considered his equivalent and thus also represented as a boar. Being that the boar is also considered a solar symbol, its role within the evil tradition is magnified because the sun itself is strongly involved in fascination as it will be explained in chapter 15. The boar is also an icon of physical strength, so by using a part of its body as a protective device, the wearer is projecting this strength to fight the evil eye.

4.2 Cats

The presence of cats in evil eye tradition is more than justified due to all the customs and folklore related to this animal. Unfortunately for them, their use in charms usually brings them to death. Their category of semi-gods / semi-devils has owed them a lot of problems and a lot of contradictions. An interesting fact about cats in the folklore of the British Islands is that, in some places, they are considered demoniac creatures and, therefore, when entering a house, the Welsh usually said: "God save all, barring the cat" (Nuttall-Smith, G. N. 1919, 239). The Irish said something very similar as Lady Francesca Wilde told us: "God save all here, except the cat" (Wilde, F. 1888, 188).

Black cats (fig. 8) have been in trouble within popular tradition: they are considered as lucky in many parts of the British Isles and ill-fated in others. The Welsh say:

[25] This will be seen in more detail in another chapter.

A black cat, I've heard it said,
Can charm all ill away,
And keep the house wherein she dwells
From fever's deadly sway. [26](Owen, E. 1896, 341).

However, in other areas the Welsh also say:

Never keep about the house
A white cock, nor a black cat[27](Davies, J. C. 1911, 227)

The presence of this duality has its origins in the advent of Christianity to the British Isles, which brought the belief that a black cat was considered as the favourite animal of the Christian Devil. This caused a double tradition where ones kept its previous status as good omen while others adopted the new one. Nevertheless, black cats have special psychical features which other felines do not have, not even other cats. In Irish tradition they are endowed with reason, are able to understand conversations and can speak if they consider it opportune. They are said to be remarkably bad-tempered, artful, malignant and skilled in deception and, what it is more, people should be very cautious in caressing them, for they have a venomous

Figure 8

Figure 9

The white and black cat. None of them seems to be evil. Photographs by Milagros Torrado Cespón

[26] Cath dduy mi glywais ddlwedyd, /A feor swyno hefyd /A chadw'r teulu lle mae'n hyw /O afael pob rhyw glefyd

[27] Na chawd byth yng ynghyleh Jy dy, / na cheiliong gwyn na chath ddu.

heart and the evil eye (Wilde, F. 1888). In spite of all this , a black cat has the honour of being the Druidical cat, that is, the king of all the cats in Ireland, which is able to speak and wears a silver chain (Wilde, F. 1888).

A white cat (fig. 9) comes off worst because it may be the Devil himself in disguise, as it happened in a village named Eglwyswrw, in Wales, where the "Evil One" used to appear in the form of a white lady or a white cat (Davies, J.C. 1911, 181). A 17th century poem by the English John Denham states this difference in favour of black cats:

> Kiss the black cat,
> And that'll make you fat;
> Kiss ye the white one
> And that'll make ye lean (Howey, M. O. 1993, 218).

Here, "fat" and "lean" must be taken in the sense of "wealth" and "poverty". For the English a white cat is also problematic. If children on their way to school find a white cat, that means bad luck. To avoid this fate, they have to spit or turn around and make the sign of the cross. The fact of using saliva as a protection against the cat connects us with evil eye. Spitting is used to counteract an evil eye, either spitting on the person to whom the curse is addressed (for example, in Scotland, spitting on a child when he is being blessed by a possible envious person), on the person suspected of having the evil eye (for example, in England was common spitting three times on the person's face, as I explain in the chapter dealing with liquids) or on the ground. Also in England, however, the white cat was believed to bring good fortune if it belonged to a family something which implies a new contradiction with the general custom.

In Scotland the death of a cat inside the house, whatever its colour, was considered as very unlucky. For this reason, when the house cat was ill, it was taken outside and provided with food and water and then the family waited for either a recovery or a death (Napier, J. 2006, 66). This passion for cats went beyond for the Egyptians, who, when a cat died, they remained in deep sorrow.

Cats were a sacred animal in Egypt and considered the earthly representation of the solar gods (fig. 10). Goddess Bastet (also known as Ubastet, Bubastis or Pasht) was represented with a cat's head. She was specially worshiped at the city of Aboo-Pasht where the death of a cat was greatly mourned, for it was considered as a representative of the goddess. Bast stood for a benign side of the sun, opposed to Sketh, another solar cat goddess who personified the fierce consuming fire of the scorching sun (Howey, M. O. 1993, 23). Thus, the catlike goddesses represented the different degrees of solar force. But the identification of cats with the sun does not finish with them. Both Bast and Sketh represent the female cat and the very Ra, the sun god par excellence, the male. He assumed the form of a cat in order to fight Rerek, the serpent of evil. Rerek, under the name of Apap, was an immortal snake who dwelled in the Other World. Ra, as a cat confronted Apap during an eclipse and was able to defeat and sent it to the depths of darkness (Howey, M. O. 1993, 32). In the papyrus of Nebseni (included in the funerary text *The Book of Death*), the British Egyptologist Samuel Birch (1813-1885) translated the description of the combat made by Ra: "I am the Great Cat at the pool of the Persea, there in Heliodopolis; the

Figure 10 Egyptian cat sculpture wearing the udjat, symbol of Ra and amulet against the evil eye nowadays. The British Museum. Photograph by Milagros Torrado Cespón

night of the battle made by the binders of the wicked, the day of strangling the enemies of the entire World" (Howey, M. O. 1993, 35). The fact that the cat was considered as a solar symbol from the times of ancient Egyptians gives it further significance within fascination. As I will explain in another chapter, sun and evil eye are closely related.

There is also a cat- headed god in Celtic mythology. This was worshiped by Cairbre Cinn-Cait, ruler of the Aithech tuatha or Attacotti when they revolted against the Milesians. He was considered a cruel warrior who seized Ireland from south to north wearing two cat's ears in his head and cat's fur through his ears. The cat-god, and Cairbre, may be represented in the Welsh and Irish tales of monster-cats which came out from under the hill to destroy the countryside (Mackay, R. C. 1997).

Cats are also related to the evil eye tradition due to their relationship with witches, which are widely believed to posses this power. Witches had the power of transforming themselves into some animals, among them, the cat. Cats were also considered as witches' familiars, so these animals were sometimes considered to be sent by witches to accomplish their evil intentions. Cats became closely related to witches in Ireland due to the existence of Cailleagh na'G Cat (the "Old hag of the Cat") in mythology, a witch which was said to be fed by her cats. In 1730 a Scottish man suspected that witches were stealing wine from his cellar. He took a sword and entered the cellar at night to see it full of cats. He was able to cut off the leg one of them. The day after, an old woman believed to be a witch was found in her house with one of her legs off (Howey, M. O. 1993, 98). Cats were also considered as witches' familiars and could used for casting the evil eye. Two women were hanged in Lincoln in 1618 because they had bewitched the children of the Earl of Rutland by rubbing a handkerchief upon a cat (Howey, M. O. 1993, 185). Rubbing a cat was

also a method of getting rid of the evil eye when it affected cattle. In this way, when a cow was overlooked at Harris (Outer Hebrides), her owner had to pick a cat and rub it across her body. The cow would recover quickly (Maclagan, R. C. 1902, 196). Also in Scotland, a woman cured an overlooked baby. She dipped the cat's paws in a bowl with water where a red thread was placed and which she after tied to the baby's neck (Campbell, J. G. 1902, 61). Cat's hairs on their own also have the power to eliminate the influence of an evil eye when butter does not come. In this case, you have to pluck three white hairs from a black cat's tail and throw them into the supposed bewitched cream (Radford, E. & Radford, M.A. 1995, 78).

Rubbing a cat was the mildest method in which a cat was used for curative purposes or against the evil eye. The blood of a black cat was used in the Highlands as a cure for epilepsy. The original remedy employed a black cock, but when it was not available, cat's blood was sprinkled over the person afflicted instead (Ross, A. 2000, 94). Blood, but not from a concrete being, is also used against the evil eye in Burnley (Lancashire, England) where it is used to paint the superior part of the mouth of the person suspected of casting the evil eye (Harnland, J. & Wilkinson, T.T. 1973, 69).

It was also a custom in England enclosing cats between the walls of a new building. In 2009 a mummified cat was found in a Devon village when doing an alteration in a house. Doctor Marion Gibson from Exeter University explained that "cats were often put into walls as some kind of

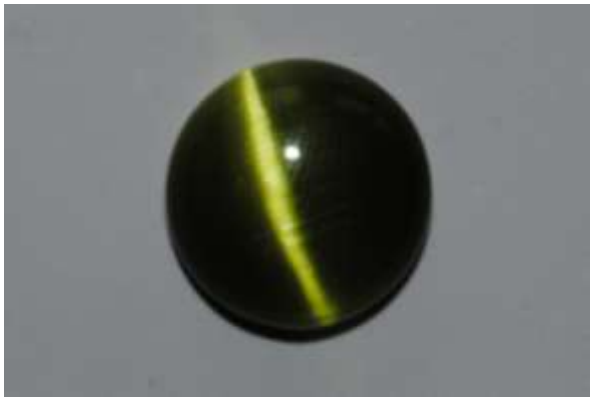

Figure 11 Cat's eye stone. Photograph by Milagros Torrado

good luck charm. They seem to be designed to keep away witches, the evil eye, bad luck, vermin, anything that can be seen as a threat to the house."[28] Similarly, a cat was found between the walls of Westminster Abbey when the east end was rebuilt. This was considered as a sacrifice to the Sun-god, an identification of Horus with Christ (Howey, M. O. 1993, 113). Thus, we can see a clear link between cats and the evil eye. As the sun could be considered as the original source of the evil eye, as it will be explained in chapter 15, the use of one of its representatives (a cat, in this case) as protection is very effective. The use of images representing the evil that wants to be counteracted has been proved to be very common, especially in the evil eye tradition. The use of eyes or eye-like figures is very popular in Turkey, the eye of Horus (which represents both the Sun and the eye) in Egypt or the feather in India. A semi-precious stone resembling an eye named "cat's eye" (fig. 11) is used all across the British Isles to work against the power of the evil eye. Nowadays we can also find another type of "cat's eye" which protects our journeys: those reflectors placed on the roads which return the automobiles' headlights. Although their aim is not that of avoiding the evil eye, it can be equiparable to other amulets (they shine and protect from danger).

Cats are used against evil eye because they can also cause it. There exists in the Highlands the belief that if a cat is allowed to sleep beside a baby, he or she could die, because the animal may suck its breath (Ross, A. 2000, 102). There is an equivalent in Galician tradition where if a cat (especially kittens or female cats) breaths next to a child, he or she will fall ill due to the "aire", a form of evil eye which affects its victims physically provoking from weakness to death. The medical

[28] http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/devon/8011361.stm

explanation for this is that cats can cause toxoplasmosis, an infectious illness transmitted by this animal.

4.3 Cowry

The shell of this mollusc, genus *Cypraea* (fig. 12), was found as an amulet in some parts of the British Isles, although it is not found in their coasts. Cowries were found in (mainly) female burials in England around the end of the sixth century (Meaney, A. L. 1981, 123). What it is common it that there is another type of mollusc of the genus *Trivia*, which has nothing to do with the actual cowry but which looks like it. Therefore, real cowry shells were found in the burials of wealthy women because they had to be brought from the continent.

Figure 12 Cowry shell. Photograph by Milagros Torrado

The use of cowry (and by extension, trivia) in the British Isles as amulets against the evil eye is due to its form resembling an eye. This also happens in other part of the world where the shell is found, such as Iran, Arabia, Italy or India, and also as a common amulet among Gypsies. Its shape is not only similar to that of an eye, but also to that of a vulva, thus, giving an example of the identification of the eye with a vulva. As a consequence, we can identify it as a fertility symbol and, as a consequence, a symbol of life which is opposed to the destruction brought by the evil eye.

4.4 Owls

In the first chapter, we observed the term "owl-blasting", however, the relationship between fascination and owls is, by no means, clear. We can attribute the use of the word "owl" due to the fact that eyes are an important feature in its physical appearance. Nevertheless, it is also important to note that the owl is considered and ill-fated bird all across the British Isles: it is thought to be a death omen when heard. They are also considered witches' familiars, bringing again the problem of setting a frontier between witchcraft and evil eye. Within Scottish tradition we find the known as "Cailleach Oidhche" or "Night Hag" which was identified with an owl and that the Welsh called "aderyn y corff", that is the "corpsebird", leaving no doubt about the negative connotations of this bird (Mackay, R. C. 1997). Up to this point, we could consider that the use of the phrase "owl-blasting" is an extension of the misfortune that may be caused by this bird. But, giving us another turn of the screw, the owl can also considered a benign animal. Its eggs were used in England to strengthen failing eyesight. Also, owl-broth was giving to children suffering from whooping-cough (Radford, E. & Radford, M.A. 1995, 257).

In literature we can find a reference to the goat-sucker, a type of owl, which is as feared as a basilisk. It appears in Charles Kingsley's *At Last: A Christmas in the West Indies* (1871), chapter 13:

> I found out the next morning that the obnoxious bird was not an owl, but a large goat-sucker, a Nycteribius, I believe, who goes by the name of jumby-bird among the English Negroes and no wonder; for most ghostly and horrible is his cry. But worse: he has but one eye, and a glance from that glaring eye,

> as from the basilisk of old, is certain death; and worse still, he can turn off its light as a policeman does his lantern, and become instantly invisible opinions which, if verified by experiment, are not always found to be in accordance with facts.

4.5 Snakes

Snakes have been a fearful animal since the creation of man, at least if we speak in biblical terms. The first snake we find is that which deceived Adam and Eve in Paradise. Thus, serpents have acquired a feeling of apprehension all through history that makes them easy to relate to the evil eye tradition, especially because they are said to have the power to fascinate their victims and also because they are phallic symbols. Actually, snakes do not fascinate their victims in the sense we are studying here. Some distract their victim with their skin patterns or by means of an appendage (as the case of the rattlesnake); others quickly bite their preys and wait for them to paralyze. It is also said that their preys are paralyzed with fear before them, so they are not able to move. However, the belief in their fascinating power is too extended nowadays to be demystified. There are many examples in British literature illustrating this belief. The Scottish writer Sir Walter Scott talks about the fascination of the rattlesnake in *Redgauntlet* (1824), chapter 6:

> "Will you swear to that?, said the singular man, who seemed to await the result of this debate, secure as a rattle-snake is of the prey which has once felt its fascination"

In *The Heart of Mid-Lothain* (1818), chapter 15, the same author describes the act:

> "Sometimes, more passive still, he uses the art of fascination ascribes to the rattlesnake and contents himself with glaring on the victim, though all his devious fluttering; certain that his terror, confusion, and disorder of ideas, will bring him into his jaws at last"

Here, we can see a reference to fear which links the paralysis of the prey with the supposed fascination.

Rudyard Kipling also talks about the power of fascination in his *Jungle Book* (1894), chapter 3, when Baloo and Baghera fell under the hypnotic powers of Kaa:

> He turned twice or thrice in a big circle, weaving his head from right to left. Then he began making loops and figures of eight with his body, and soft, oozy triangles that melted into squares and five-sided figures, and coiled mounds, never resting, never hurrying, and never stopping his low humming song. It grew darker and darker, till at last the dragging, shifting coils disappeared, but they could hear the rustle of the scales.
>
> Baloo and Bagheera stood still as stone, growling in their throats, their neck hair bristling, and Mowgli watched and wondered.
>
> "Bandar-log," said the voice of Kaa at last, "can ye stir foot or hand without my order? Speak!"
>
> "Without thy order we cannot stir foot or hand, O Kaa!"

More linked to the evil eye phenomenon is the basilisk or cockatrice. Although they are considered as synonyms at present, they were two different creatures in origin. The etymology of both words is clearly of different origin. The

term "cockatrice" comes from a medieval translation of the Greek "ικνευμων", "ichneumon", an Egyptian quadruped which devoured reptile's eggs. The word "ichneumon" derives from a verb meaning "tracker". The medieval translation was made taking into account the meaning of the verb "calcare" in Latin, "to tread", which was seen as an equivalent to the Greek word. On the other hand, the term "basilisk", also from Greek, comes from "βασιλισχος", a type of snake which was considered the king of serpents due to a crown-like crest on its head.

At this stage, the basilisk was a small venomous snake. Brenda Rosen (Rosen, B. 2009, 93) tell us that "the creature was so deadly that trees and grasses in its vicinity were burned up, resulting in the deserts of the Middle East where it lived". As time went by, both the cockatrice and the basilisk came to have a common origin as mythical creatures. They are born from a seven-year-old cock's egg which is incubated by a toad. Their physical appearance is that of a cock with the body of a reptile. Sir Bernard Burke (Burke, B. 1884) writes that the difference between a cockatrice and a basilisk in heraldry is that the latter has a dragon head at the end of its tail. The confusion appears to date from the 14th century, when Geoffrey Chaucer included a "basilicok" in his Canterbury Tales:

> This is that oother hand of the devel with
> Five fingers to cache the pepel to his vileynye.
> The firste finger is the foo lookynge
> Of the fool woman and of the fool man, that
> Sleeth, right as the basilicok sleeth folk by the
> Venym of his sighte; for the coveitise of eyen
> Folweth the coveitise of the herte. (*The Parson's Tale*)

Here, we already find a reference to the killing power of the basilisk and to the term "covetousness", which link us with the evil eye tradition.

This creature, let us call it "basilisk" from now on, was said to kill by the power of its glance and, in some versions, due to its venomous breath. The only way to avoid this mortal effect was seeing the basilisk before it could see you and, thus, it would die. The touch of a basilisk will deprive any tree of bearing fruit (Collins, A. H. 2008, 146), which is a reflection of the effect the evil eye has on plants. It was believed during the Middle Ages that a basilisk appeared at Wiston Castle (Pembrokeshire, Wales). In the 13th century the ownership of the castle was discussed and it was established that the one who was able to hunt the basilisk would inherit the property. It was a young boy who was able to carry on the requirement by climbing into a barrel and rolling down the hill stopping at the entrance of the basilisk's lair. He looked at the creature from a hole and said: "I can see you, but you can't see me". Then, the basilisk was struck dead when it poked its head out of the hole (Howard, M. 2009, 171-172)

There are many literary references to the basilisk. Let us see some examples from Scotland, England and Ireland.

Sir Walter Scott writes in *Ivanhoe* (1819), chapter 35:

> "The soldiers of the Cross, who should shun the glance of a woman as the eye of a basilisk, live in open sin, not with the females of their own race only, but with the daughters of the accursed heathen, and more accursed Jew."

Women here are to be avoided by the clerics because of religious reasons, so they are considered as dangerous as a basilisk. However, the term cockatrice appears also as an appellative to those women of dubious virtue, "probably from the fascination of the eye" (Nares, R. 1867, 173).

Arthur Conan Doyle also attributes the power of the killing glance to woman in *The White Company* (1891), chapter 2:

> "There is the country of the Amazons, and the country of the dwarfs, and the country of the fair but evil women who slay with beholding, like the basilisk"

James Joyce includes it in *Ullyses* (1922), episode 3, when describing a way of looking:

> "A garland of grey hair on his comminated head see him me clambering down to the footpace (descende), clutching a monstrance, basiliskeyed"

Charles Kingsley also attributes basilisk characteristics to the eyes of a human being, which he further describes in *Alton Locke, Tailor and Poet* (1849), chapter 27:

> "Yes, there he sat, watching me like a basilisk, with his dark, glittering, mesmeric eyes, out of a remote corner of the room –not in contempt or anger, but there was a quiet , assured, sardonic smile about his lips, which chilled me to the heart".

From all the folklore related to evil eye surrounding snakes we find a kind of amulets known as snakestones. These stones received various names depending on the location. The most common are serpent's stones, snakestones, adder stones and hag stones or witch stones. Their formation is described as follows:

Figure 13 Holed stone. Photogrpah by Milagros Torrado Cespón

> about Midsummer Eve it is usual for snakes to meet in company, and that by their joining heads together and

> hissing, a kind of bubble is formed, which the rest by continual hissing blow on till it passes quite through the body, and then it immediately hardens, and resembles a glass ring, which whoever finds will prosper in all undertakings (Deane, J. B. 1833).

The date of this gathering may vary according to the place. It was held on Midsummer Eve in Cornwall but, during May Day eve (Beltane) in Wales as it was witnessed by "people in the Principality" (Radford, E. & Radford, M. A. 1995, 12).

Figure 14 Ammonite fossil. Manx Museum. Photograph by Milagros Torrado Cespón

There are four possible snake stones: a holed stone of, usually blue, yellow or green colour with vitreous appearance but also common stones with a hole (fig 13), a small oval pebble with patters resembling snakes (usually blue, yellow, red, black or green), ammonite fossils (fig. 14) and echinoid fossils or shells (fig. 15). Oval stones without holes are also described by Pliny, the Elder, in his *Historia Naturalis* as ovum anguinium, that is, serpent egg. Small rounded pebbles have been found in Pictish settlements in the northern islands and in Caithress (Scotland). These were painted with carefully executed curvilinear designs which can show us that when snakestones were not found, they were made. Which

Figure 15 Echinoid shell. Photograph by Milagros Torrado Cespón

one was the original seems difficult to trace, but the four of them have acquired the same properties against snake bite and evil eye. Nevertheless, holed stones seem to be the most frequent no matter which material they be, something which, probably, has been made extensive to holed pennies, which are considered lucky amulets too. But, in order to be sure of the authenticity of your snakestone, there is a method to prove its genuineness by throwing it into a moving stream. If it is a real snakestone, Pliny says, it will float against the current (Radford, E & Radford, M. A. 1995, 12). This offers us a parallel with the identification of an evil eye possessor. Pliny, the Elder, stated that an evil eye beholder would not sink in water (Park, R. 1912, 12). Thus, agent and protector share a characteristic which we could interpret as case of sympathetic magic. The snakestone which fits in this definition is the echinoid shell, for, as it being hollow, it can float without difficulty.

In Wales, they are known as glein nadroeth (snakestone), glein mamacal (in Swansea) or maen magl (eye ailment stone), glian y Neird (bead of the adders) and nan Druidhe (Druid's glass). According to Deane (Deane, J. B. 1833) British druids had these stones in great consideration as amulets. In a poem of the bard Taliesin (6th century) describes his attributes in *The Fold of the Bards*, book III including the serpent by saying and, therefore including this term as something desirable also for bards:

> I am a harmonious one; I am a clear singer.
> I am steel; I am a druid.
> I am an artificer; I am a scientific one.
> I am a serpent; I am love; I will indulge in feasting (Skene,
> W. F. 1868, 523)

The use of the snakestones in Wales, apart from being useful as a protection against the evil eye, was very valuable against any eye disease (Halliday, W.R. 1921, 269).

English snakestones are also known as lucky stones and witch or hag stones. Here, almost any perforated stone is considered as one of these stones. They are used to guard both humans and cattle (especially pigs) against the evil eye, but, above all, to protect crops, which are very liable to be damaged by an evil eye when they are good (Elworthy, T. 1903). In Lancashire, holed stones, which we can identify as snakestones, were hung behind the door to prevent the evil eye from falling on a newborn (Thompson, C. J. S. 1995, 28). In order to protect children, they wore these snakestones hung on their necks (Kent, J.J. 2004) just as the Romans wore them. However, the use Romans made of snakestones was slightly different. They used them as amulets in trials to overrule the judgement in their favour (Bathurst, J.D. 1833, 57). We can also find them hung next to door in the same way we hung horseshoes. The importance of having a snakestone was such that they have to be protected from being stolen by the fairies. In order to do this, the peasant would keep them enclosed in an iron box, which is a material feared by the fairies (Kent, J.J. 2004). In other parts of England they were used to provide good luck in general. In Dorchester (Dorset) when a snakestone was found, it must be picked with the right hand, whirled around the head three times and, finally, through over the left shoulder (Duffin, C. J. 2011, 89).

In Scottish tradition, killing a serpent you find in your way going on journey brings good luck (MacPhail, M. 1898, 85), what it is more, all along Great Britain, it was considered unlucky if you found an adder and you did not kill it (Radford, E & Radford, M.A. 1995, 11). Therefore, the use of snakestones was also highly valuable

as protection. The Scottish folk give different names to the snakestones: adder beads, clachan nathaireach (serpent's stones) and snakestones. Adder beads are different from the Welsh and English snakestones in shape: they are not holed stones, but vitreous pebbles of blue, green, yellow or red colour. The obsession of the Scottish with having these beads has led people to consider even old bottle glass as this type of stone. Possible snakestones have been found in Pictish settlements dated between A.D. 200 and 800 in the northern isles Scotland and in Caithness if we considered the description given by Audrey L. Meaney (Meaney, A.L. 1981, 90): "small rounded beach pebbles painted with simple but carefully executed, often curvilinear, design in a dye which is now dark in colour". Nevertheless, these could also be the equivalent to those used in Manx burials. Here the coffin was provided with white pebbles for throwing them at the Devil in case he wanted to interfere in his way to the other world (Gill. W. W. 2002, 5). Sometimes, Scots make a difference between adder beads and snakestones, the latter being holed stones. Although also used as an amulet against evil eye, adder beads and snakestones were mostly used to cure snake bite.

Although curious, snakestones are also found in Ireland. It is curious because there are not snakes in Ireland. If we follow tradition, we are told that Saint Patrick forced out all the serpents of the Emerald Island, but, in fact, there have never been any snakes there. There is a geologic reason for this: since the beginning of the last Ice Age, three million years ago, Ireland has frequently been covered by ice, so for this cold-blooded reptile life there would be impossible.Thomas Elworthy (Elworthy, T. 1903) found snakestones in Antrion (North Ireland) hung up in stables in order to protect cattle. When one of the animals was ill, a snakestone was boiled and the water given to it to drink for a good recovery.

4.6 Toads

Toads appear related to the power of the evil eye under various forms. They are considered as witches' familiars, that is, one of those animals which perform their commands as is the case with cats and hares as it was explained before. Nevertheless, they have a higher degree of significance in witchcraft than other animals, because a toad may represent the Devil and the Devil is sometimes believed to be responsible of witches' powers. In Cornwall we can observe the important role of a toad in a ritual recorded in the nineteenth century to become a witch:

> Go to the chancel of a church to sacrament, hide away the bread from the hands of the priest, at midnight carry it around the church from south to north, crossing east three times. The third time a big toad, open-mouthed, will be met, put the bread in it; as soon as swallowed he will breathe three times upon the man, and from that time he will become a witch (Courtney, M. A. 1887, 198).

On the other hand, toads also have special significance on their own if we talk about fascination. We can see an instance of how getting the power of the evil eye by burying them, recorded in Derbyshire (England):

> ye gang out ov'a night –ivery night, while ye find nine toads – an'when ye've gitten t'nine toads, ye hang'em up ov'a string, an'ye make a hole and buries t'toads i't hole – and as't toads pines away, so't person pines away 'at you've looked upon wiv a yevil eye, an' they pine and pine away while they die, without any disease at all (Gatty, M. 1850, 429).

This charm included further symbolism than that of using toads. It also includes number nine, which is a sacred number within Celtic culture. However, here

it is used to perform an evil deed. It seems that the power attributed to this number has crossed the line between good and evil.

The third quality that relates toads to the evil eye is that the basilisk is born of an egg incubated by a toad. In addition, we must also be aware of its properties as a toxic, which may lead to hallucinations.

Toads were believed to have a precious stone inside their head which have many curative properties, known as toadstones (fig. 16). Among them, although not frequently stated, was that of protecting against the evil eye. They were generally petrified teeth of fish or dark brown or grey stones usually worn as rings. These stones had the property of changing their colour or sweat if the wearer was bewitched (Radford, E. & Radford, M. A. 1995, 343). Shakespeare tells us about toadstones in the first scene of act II of *As You Like It* (1623):

Figure 16 Extraction and use of a toadstone. Illustration by Johannes de Cuba, 1497. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Toadstone_extraction_de_Cuba.jpg

> Sweet are the uses of adversity,
> Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,
> Wears yet a precious jewel in his head

We can also find instances where toads are used to cure an overlooked person. This cure was recorded in Stalbridge (Dorset) where it is known as "toad fair". The charm consisted in wearing a bag round the neck which contains toad's legs which were torn while the toad was still alive (Udal, J. S. 1989, 215).

4.7 Wolves

Wolf's fangs appear frequently as an amulet in many countries where the evil eye is present. This makes us realize that its use is an imported one. In the seventeenth century, the scholar John Aubrey recorded the use of wolf's fangs in Ireland, where they were usually set on silver and wore as pendants (Meaney, A. L. 1981, 136). During the Middle Ages it was also common seeing wolves' hides hung around rooms as protection (Mackay, R. C. 1997).

4.8 Wrasse

This fish, Labrus bergylta, hides in its throat a t-shaped bone which is considered to be a good anti-evil eye amulet in the Isle of Man. This is known as "crosh bollan" (fig. 17) and it is said to protect from the action of fairies and the evil eye, as the Manx saying tells:

Figure 17 Crosch bollan. Property of the Dr. Fenella Bazin. Photograph by Milagros Torrado

> If bollan cross
> Be in your purse
> You'll never stray
> And lose your way[29] (Moore, A. W. 1924)

[29] My crosh bollan ayns dty sporran / Cha jean oo dy bragh er-shagheyn

Also, Reverend J. E. Pattinson wrote the following lines in a poem about the fishing of wrasse:

> Carve him most carefully; remember now
> He bears a cross, and you'll find it where
> Reason stands sentry to the outward world,
> E'en in the head, the seat of Reason's home.
> So, as you delicately pick the bone,
> Search for the cross — when found you'll value it
> For ever — 'tis the Manxman's safety-charm
> By land or sea, — where'er he chance to roam. (Pattinson, J. E. 1870, 37).

The fact that this bone is considered as a good protection has to do with its shape which is representative of the Viking god Thor. The same symbol, but in this case in the shape of a bone sheep have in their tongues, is used also in the Isle of Man to avoid getting lost in an unknown place (Dawkins, E. B. 1913, 124). It was known as Thor's Hammer and its use was still very popular during the twentieth century.

Fascinology in the Society and Literature of the British Isles

Milagros Torrado Cespón

5. Sexual Representations

The evil eye tradition seems to have a strong connection with sexual representations. The use of the fascinum (a penis shaped amulet) it is well known, especially in those places which were under the Roman rule. It is worth taking into account the relationship between the evil eye and sexual attributes established by Alan Dundes in his article "Wet and Dry, the Evil Eye" (Dundes, A. 1992, 257-312). He identifies a pair of eyes with either a breast or testicles. In the case of a single evil eye, it may be identified with either the penis or the vulva. To support his theory, he explains how these elements are symbols of life and that from both emanate a liquid. He also states that life depends on liquid, thus the importance of liquids in counteracting and preventing the action of the evil eye, either by means of saliva or blood, but also the importance of preserving these liquids against overlooking. We can observe this in the eagerness to keep away the evil eye from cows, as it can injure their udders and, therefore, their milk or in the fear of a man or a women being affected by impotence or sterility. But he also states that the quantity of good (vital liquids in this case) is limited, so when one possesses a significant amount of an important body fluid that means that there is another one who lacks it. This, as a consequence, leads us to envy, the main factor when we talk about the evil eye.

The use of the fascinum or any other phallic symbol seems to derive from the cult to the Greek god Priapus characterised by his huge penis and who was the protector of both crops and farm animals (Bonnefoy, I. 1992, 139). Due to this, phallic representations were placed in walls and buildings as a mean of protection.

However, the use of sexual representations to counteract the evil eye can also be seen from several points of view. Likewise blue eye representations are used in Turkey to avert the evil eye, phallic symbols have the same function: counteract by the use of an equivalent if we consider that they represent eyes. We can also think the contrary: sexual representations are fertility symbols. The evil eye represents destruction, so sexual elements are the best way of counteracting fascination because they represent life. Also, we can consider as a way of diverting the evil glance to something which produces shame or attraction in the beholder: genitals. An example of this attraction is also present in the use of precious stones and metals. The evil eye is attracted to these elements and forgets the target of its envy.

5.1 Sheela-Na-Gig

The figure of the Sheela-Na-Gig is still alive in the mind of people. By the end of the twentieth century, she was addressed this song:

> I've been trying to show you over and over.
> Look at these my child-bearing hips,
> Look at these my ruby red ruby lips,
> Look at these my work strong arms and
> You've got to see my bottle full of charm.
> I lay it all at your feet.
> You turn around and say back to me,
> He said:
> Sheela-Na-Gig, Sheela-Na-Gig,
> You, exhibicionist.
> Sheela-Na-Gig, Sheela-Na-Gig

> You, exhibicionist. (from the song *Sheela-Na-Gig* (1992), by the English singer P.J. Harvey)

A Sheela-Na-Gig is for many a grotesque figure of a woman which opens her vagina with her hands showing no modesty at all. What seems surprising for many others is the fact that these carved bodies appear especially in churches. The passing of time and the decorum of Christiany have mutilated them and many appear as mere feminine shapes or as clearly destroyed images. But the Sheela-Na-Gig had a mission to fulfil: she was a protective device against the evil eye. The displaying of genitals (in this case feminine) has been considered since ancient time to be an effective way of dispersing bad luck. Dr. Freigtag (Freigtag, B. 2004, 19) tells us how in bygone days men afflicted by hard luck would turn to certain women who displayed their pudenda and thus counteract the evil influences. A man named Walter Mahon-Smith wrote in "The Irish Times" that in 1913 near the place he lived in Ireland:

> a deadly feud had continued for generations between the families of two small farmers. One day, before the I World War, when the men of one of the families armed with pitch forks and heavy blackthorn sticks, attacked the home of their enemy; the woman-of-the-house came to the door of her cottage and in full sight of all lifted her skirt and underclothes high above her head, displaying her naked genitals. The enemy of her and her family fled in terror (Jerman, J. & Wier, A. 1999, 146)

The German traveller Johann Kohl pointed out in 1840's that in Ireland it was a common practice for those men who believed to be the target of an evil eye to turn to certain women who would display their genitals in order to avert it and bring them good luck (McMahon, J. & Roberts, J. 2001, 23). Nudity is also employed to calm

the Ulster mythological warrior Cúchulainn, who, after killing three enemies at the age of seven, comes back to the castle so excited that the inhabitants are afraid of his thirst for blood. Then, King Conchobar orders the 150 women in there to nude themselves and go outside. Cúchulainn, before this sight, calms down full of shame (Brasseur, M. 2001, 62-63).

Nakedness is a good way of averting the evil eye because it attracts the malefic glance of an ill-disposed person which was intended to be fixed on some other part. Thus, carving Sheelas in a church or any other building is a way of protecting it, for the eye would be fixed on the obscenity and, as it happened with Cúchulainn, would stop the anger. In addition, the vulva is a symbol of the generative power of woman, so it involves good connotations. On the Isle of Man women used to expose their vulvas to the bonfires during festivals so to get the beneficial influence of the fire and, at the same time, bless it with their own power (McMahon, J. & Roberts J. 2001, 84).

Figure 18 Sheela-Na-Gig at Kilpeck. Photograph by Tom Shoemaker

One of the most famous Sheela-na-gig is the one at Kilpeck (Herefordshire, England) (fig. 18). She was the subject of a poem in 1984 by the Irish Nobel Prize Seamus Heaney which includes the following lines:

> Her hands holding herself
> Are like hands in an old barn
> Holding a bag open.
> I was outside looking in

At its lapped and supple mouth
Running grain

I looked up under the thatch
At the dark mouth and eye
Of a bird's nest or a rat hole,

Smelling the rose on the wall,
Mildew, an earthen floor,
The warm depth of the caves.
And then one night in the yard
I stood still under heavy rain
Wearing the bag like a caul. (Heaney, S. 1984, 49-50).

5.2 The Figa and Other Hand Gestures

A "figa" is an imported element in the tradition of the evil eye in the British Isles but its gesture was used in England as a protective device. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, it was common in Yorkshire (England) "to put the thumb between the first and second finger pointing downwards", this, as Dean Ramsey explained, "was believed to be an infallible protection against the evil influence of one particularly malevolent and powerful witch" (Thompson, C. J. S. 1995, 72). Traditionally, "figas" are made of jet, a fossil substance which seems to have curative properties, or of red coral. Pliny stated that jet was used for curing tooth ache and, reduced to powder, was good for eyestrain (De Osma, 1999, 3). The shape of figas symbolizes the feminine genitals, which links us to the use of nudity to avert the evil eye. The word "figa" comes from Latin "ficus", meaning "fig". The fig and

the fig tree are also sexual symbols as the leaves of this tree denote a symbolical covering for the genitals and are also a representation of the masculine triad due to their shape. Moreover, the fig stands for the female pudenda, as it supposedly bears some resemblance with a virgin uterus (Howard, C. 1909, 150). Other authors considered it as a phallic symbol because it was the fruit devoted to the god Priapus (Knight, R.P. 1980, 128), in fact, during the Hellenistic and Roman eras the statues of Priapus were made of fig tree wood (Bonnefoy, I. 1992, 141). Nowadays, "figa" stills bears the meaning of female genitals in Galicia. The gesture represented by the figa is considered in Turkey as very rude. In present day English there exists the idiom "a fig for anybody" or "a fig for anything" which means the same as a phallic hand, that is, a hand with all the fingers folded with the exception of the middle one which is a well-known symbol of scorn (Knight, R.P. 1980, 129).

Another gesture made with the hand is the horns or "mano cornuta", which symbolizes the male genitals (Mathew, P. 2003, 74) and which is used mainly in Italy. The British folk, although there is little evidence of its use, seem to be familiar with it, since the English writer Wilkie Collins includes a reference to it in *Heart and Science. A Story of the Present Time* (1883) in chapter 6, although in an Italian context:

> Teresa looked at her, and suddenly looked away again. Mrs Gallilee stopped on her way out, at a chiffonier, and altered the arrangement of some of the china on it. The duenna followed on tiptoe – folded her thumb and two middle fingers into the palm of her hand – and, stretching out the forefinger and the little finger, touched Mrs Gallilee on the back, so softly that she was unaware of it. "The Evil Eye", Teresa whispered to herself in Italian, as she stole back to her place

The use of the "mano cornuta" was also recorded in England, where, against evil spells "one doubles the thumb in the right hand and protrudes the first and fourth fingers to make horns" (Summers, M. 2000, 164). Another recorded hand gesture is that known as the "V", which consists in two forked spread fingers pointing to the evil eye beholder (Bottrell, W. 1880, 191).

5.3 Horseshoes

Although is not as evident as others, the horseshoe is another representation of the female genitals used as a protection against the evil eye. These representations were popular in Western Europe during the Middle Ages, but they were not originally horseshoes. The reason for the employment of horseshoes as representatives of genitals is their similitude with the feminine organ, which shape has degraded along the years and which connection with the original form was finally lost (Knight, R. P & Wright, T. 1894, 139; Knight, R. P. 1980, 119). In fact, it was used as an emblem of fecundity in Anglo-Saxon times (Park, R. 1912, 22) and it is still taken as a conventional figure for the Yoni (female genitalia) in Hindu temples (Bonwick, J. 2008, 77). This takes us to the conclusion that it is not the horseshoe that protects from the evil eye, but its shape. Thus, any arched shape became a representation of the female genitals. An example could be the use of rowan tree or mountain ash in the form of an arch to protect cattle which were found in the west of Scotland (Lawrence, R. M. 1898, 19). So, although here the material also plays an important role, in the same way Sheelas were in the entrances of the buildings to prevent the evil eye beholder to get closer, horseshoes are also placed

next to the doors. However, Scottish lore has found another explanation for the use of horseshoes. It was said that the Devil visited a blacksmith and asked to be shod. The man agreed but the Devil could not stand the pain and begged the smith to stop. He would only stop if the Devil promised not to enter into any building with a horseshoe over the threshold (Cameron, I. 1928, 79).

There was a 17th century saying in London which ran "may the horseshoe never be pulled from your threshold" (Thompson, C. J. S. 1995, 142) in order to wish good luck to somebody. The threshold was usually the place chosen for hanging horseshoes due to the meaning it has from ancient times. The threshold is the entrance which symbolizes the way in to a place where evil must not enter, that is why it was considered unlucky to step on the threshold without a horseshoe. From this custom derives the traditional entrance of the bride in the arms of the groom to avoid the evil eye falling on her (Thompson, C. J. S. 1995, 60). But the horseshoe could also be found in other places such as, for example, in the bottom of the recipient where the churning is made in the Highlands (Maclagan, R.C. 1902, 122) or hung up to the ceiling above the cattle in Somerset to keep off the pixies, a type of fairies which were believed to ride the horses during the night (Thompson, C. J. S. 1995, 101). In Cerne (Dorset), a woman was said to hang a horseshoe to discover which witch was tormenting her. When the witch appeared, she would not be able to cross the door and would ask the horseshoe to be removed (March, H.C. 1899: 480). But the meaning of the horseshoe goes further. It is also a representation of the crescent and, therefore a moon symbol. Moreover, it is made of iron, which is believed to frighten away fairies and witches. Thus, the horseshoe could be considered as a mixed amulet to which we will make more references in other sections of this thesis.

We can find an example of the use of the horseshoe in the chapter 6 of *Redgauntlet* (1924), by Sir Walter Scott, where we can read:

> 'D'ye hear that, provost?', said Summertrees; ' your wife's a witch, man; you should nail a horseshoe on your chamber door. Ha, ha, ha!

Another example is found in Dickens' *Master Humphrey's Clock* (1840), chapter 3

> The king, being rather frightened by the present, piously bestowed it upon the Archbishop of Canterbury, and returned an answer to the address, wherein he gave them golden rules for discovering witches, and laid great stress upon certain protecting charms, and especially horseshoes. Immediately the towns-people went to work nailing up horseshoes over every door, and so many anxious parents apprenticed their children to furriers to keep them out of harm's way, that it became quite a genteel trade, and flourished exceedingly.

5.4 Phalluses and Phallic Symbols

The *fascinum* was a widespread device to counteract the evil eye in Roman tradition, originated in the cult of the god Priapus. It was a representation of a penis wore mainly by children in order to be protected from the evil eye influence. The representation of phalluses as protective devices also appears in the British Isles. There is an example found in Llangennydd (Glamorgan, Wales) which represents two men with enormous erected penises in the main entrance of a farmhouse. These were carved in oak for the protection of the building in the same way Sheelas were

arranged (William, E. 1978). But the biggest phallic symbol found in the British Isles is that of the Cerne Abba Giant, in Dorset (fig. 19). This giant is a 180 feet high male figure which appears completely naked showing an erection while carrying a huge stick. He is carved in the chalk hill he is on being clearly appreciated from a bird's view. The inhabitants of Cerne consider it as a fertility symbol. It was customary to erect the maypole on the giant on May Day, that is, during the celebration of Beltane, when the power of the evil eye was considered as stronger (Wilde, F. 1890).

The maypole is another phallic symbol. It was (and it remains in some parts of Britain) customary to bring a young tree into a town square and there dance and celebrate the arriving of May. Almost for sure, these trees have occupied the place of a phallus (Knight, R. P. 1980, 139). Thomas Hardy skilfully describes the preparation of the maypole in the first chapter of the book six of his *The Return of the Native* (1878):

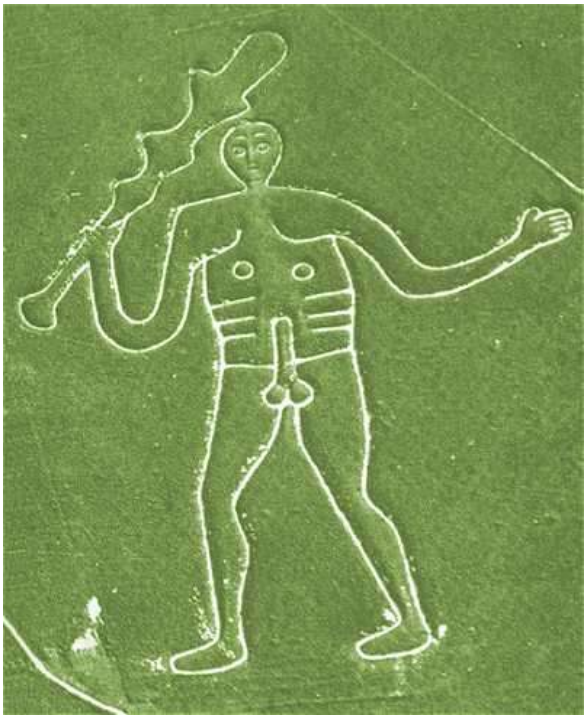

Figure 19 Air view of the Cerne Giant. Photgraph from a postcard.

> The pole lay with one end supported on a trestle, and women were engaged in wreathing it from the top downwards with wild-flowers. The instincts of merry England lingered on here with exceptional vitality, and the symbolic customs which tradition has attached to each season of the year were yet a reality on Egdon. Indeed, the impulses of all such outlandish hamlets are pagan still--in these spots homage to nature, self-adoration, frantic gaieties, fragments of Teutonic rites to

> divinities whose names are forgotten, seem in some way or other to have survived mediaeval doctrine.

Even though the relationship between the evil eye and the maypole is not obvious, they are related after all. If we take into account the protective significance of phallic symbols, we can realize that the maypole is also part of this tradition although it is not openly proclaimed as an anti-evil eye device. In addition, it is erected during May Eve celebrations, a date which is closely linked to the evil eye tradition as we will see later on.

Ophidians, which were seen before in another chapter, are also phallic symbols due, mainly, to their form. They were considered as "living phalluses", symbolizing the animating spirit of procreation, the stimulating factor the production and immortality of life (Howard, C. 1909, 156).

5.5 Crosses

Figure 20 Horse brass ornament depicting a stag from Lynton, Devon (England). Photograph by Milagros Torrado Cespón

The use of this symbol as a protective device against the evil eye may have several meanings. We can either consider it as a Christian symbol or as a pagan representation. Both possibilities are perfectly feasible since there are many references to Christianity in charms and remedies against the evil eye, especially the Trinity. However, the cross was already employed

as a symbol before the advent of Christianity and it was used, among others, as a representation of the union of the male and female sexes (Howard, C. 1909, 163; Healey, T. 1977, 290). It has had a religious sense since inmemorial times, as, for example, in Egypt, where it was held in the hands of Isis and Osiris (Howard, C. 1909, 163-166). The use of the cross as a sexual symbol cannot be assured or safely said, but it should be taken into account as a possiblity according to the opinion of different author mentioned before. The wheel crosses which are used as brass ornaments for horses were also intended to avert the evil eye, although this function has been already forgotten (Hill, J. 1981, 155). This type of cross was said to represent the wheels of the chariot which the Sun was supposed to drive through the sky (Pavitt, K. & Pavitt, W.T. 1922, 105-106). In this case, we can almost state that it was a pagan use of the cross and we can also observe another connection between the sun and the evil eye tradition. Also, as sun is considered as a phallic symbol which generates life with its rays, this representation of a cross can bear some of this significance. In other brass ornaments we find representations of stags, a animal which is also considered a solar symbol (fig. 20) (Green, M. 1990, 55).

The problems of the identification of the cross as a Christian symbol or not is reflected in the work of the Scottish Robert Louis Stevenson's *Island Night's Entertaiments* (1893), chapter 3:

> For Vigours had the Evil Eye, a common thing in a country of Europe called Italy, where men wer often struck dead by this kind of devil, and it appeared the sign of the cross was a charm against its power.
> 'And I explain it, Misi', said Namu, 'in this way: the country in Europe is a Popey country, and the devil of the Evil Eye may be a Catholic devil, or, ar least, used to Catholic ways. So then I reasoned thus: if this sign of the cross were used in

> a Popey manner it would be sinful, but when it is used only to protect men from a devil, which is a thing harmless in itself, the sign too must be, as a bottle is neither good nor bad, harmless. For the sign is neither good nor bad. But if the bottle be full of gin, the gin is bad; and if the sign be made in idolatry bad, so is the idolatry'.

Although maybe not clear enough, the sexual significance of the cross must be taken into account as just a possibility among the many other ways of interpreting it. What is clear is that its use as an amulet against the evil eye has been proved with spare data. In Ireland today the sign of the cross is still used as a protective device against anybody who gives you a spiteful glance. As this is a country with a strong Christian tradition we cannot certanly discern if it is used in a pagan way or not.

5.6 Eyes

Sexual significance represented in the eye shows us another point of view within the evil eye tradition. The eye can also be considered as sexual symbol due to its resemblance to the female genitals: the eyelids stand for the labia, the pupil represents the entrance to the vagina and the caruncle and the plica semilunaris remind to the clitoris (Alió, J. et al, 2006) (fig. 21). The power of fascination represents destruction, death and evil. On the other hand, a sexual symbol stands from the continuity of life. So, how can be the eye be both a benefic and a malefic symbol? We can consider that envy is in the root of this complex. If fascination derives from a yearning for the destruction of other's belongings and the main object

of envy is healthy offspring (by nature, a consequence of sexual intercourse) it is not surprising that the origins of this belief may lie in a sexual symbol. The eye of a barren woman envies the baby of her neighbour, so it is a sexual symbol envying what it cannot obtain. This also connects us with the possible solar origin of the evil eye, which will be explained in detail in chapter 15: the sun is considered as the eye in the sky and also considered a sexual symbol (it gives life to the Earth's surface).

Figure 21 Possible sexual interpretation of a human eye. Photograph by Milagros Torrado Cespón

So, when we find representation of eyes to fight against the evil eye influence, we could be seeing a sexual symbol equivalent to a Sheela-na-gig. Taking this into account, both the representation of sexual images and eyes are perfectly interchangeable when used as a protective device against the evil eye because they represent the same.

6. Special Times of the Year

There are some special dates in the Celtic calendar which influence the evil eye belief. As the Celtic influence in the British Isles is more than obvious, it is not strange that those days which indicate the beginning of each part of the Celtic year can influence on this superstition. At the same time, some of those dates marked in the Christian calendar, although many times heirs of a previous celebration are also worth mentioning because they have influenced the way people behave at those dates. Sometimes, there is not a patent connection between the evil eye tradition and the feast but the rituals and/or the elements used in them offer us a link worth mentioning.

6.1 Beltane

Beltane, a festivity of Celtic origin held on the first of May, is mentioned several times in this thesis, as a result, without a doubt, Beltane is the most important of Celtic celebrations in fascinologic terms. For example, it is generally believed that the power of those with the power of evil eye is greater on this day (Wilde, F. 1890). In Ireland, those mothers or nurses who took their children outside the house on this date were considered almost as monsters and even those kids who were usually protected by their lack of attractiveness were in danger (Wood-Martin, W. G. 1902, 285). This date is highly connected with the powers of witches who, in Manx folklore, were seen standing outside the houses early on the morning of May Day to

draw the good luck from the other people (Clague, J. 2005, 28) or even walking on their neighbours' fields gathering the dew so as to transfer their productiveness to their own (Craine, D. 2002, 110). In the Channel Islands it was not advisable to sit under a hawthorn on Walpurgis Night (May Eve) because it may be a witch who has turned herself into that tree on that date (Watts, D. 2007, 428). In Scotland hawthorn is used against the action of witches but also has a benign effect: the dew gathered from them on Beltane gives beauty to the maiden who washes her face with it (Macinlay, J. M. 1993, 300). Also in Scotland, in the western part, the dew gathered on Beltane morning was believed to give the power of witches but also to protect against the evil eye (Napier, J. 1879, 170). This celebration includes also the light of purifying fires.

Beltane symbolizes the rebirth of the earth; in Celtic culture it marks the beginning of summer. The date of celebration may differ in some places due to the introduction of the Gregorian calendar in Britain in 1752, which meant a difference of eleven days in relation to the previous one. Due to this, there are some parts in the British Isles where a distinction is made between the May Eve (31st April) and Old May Eve (usually on the 11th of May, but fluctuating between the 11th and the 15th depending on the location). This is case on the Isle of Man, where William Kennish the nineteenth century Manx poet, wrote the following about Old May Eve gathering all the customs and rituals performed on that day:

> Now when arrived the eleventh of May,
> As I have heard old Manxmen say,
> Each horse was snugly stall'd,
> And cows from off the grassy plain,
> Ere Sol had kiss'd the western main,
> Were promptly homewards call'd
> The sheep from off the mountain's height

Were drove in flocks to rest that night,
So fraught with pending ill,
Within the wicket of the yard,
That they from witches might be spared
By counteracting skill:
The rank bolugh[30] of magic charm,
The infernal legions to disarm
Of all their deadly power,
Was strew'd along the cow-house floor,
And round the threshold of the door,
With many a yellow flower;
And crosses of the rowan-tree
Were form'd by swains in homely glee,
And tied to each cow's tail;
And round the lintels of the byre,
To further cheek their fiendish ire,
If bolugh charm should fail;
Fot if they once their spell could lay
Upon the kine, they'd pine away
By sure and slow degrees,
And baffte all the goodwife's skill
That year her butter-crock to fill,
Or even make a cheese ;,
In vain she'd agitate the cream,
And of new hoards of butter dream
And plunge, and plunge again
The staff into the spefl-bound chum,
With many a skilful twisting turn,
And shoulder-aching pain:
She'd make the kitchen poker hot,
To counteract the spiteful plot
Of the suspected dame,

[30] Artemisia

By plunging it into the cream,
To make the spell fly off in steam;
But still no butter came.
In vain sh'ed try to make a cheese
The whey from 'mongst the curd to squeeze
Surpass'd her, though well skilvd;
For e'en the rennet's influence
Had caught the fatal consequence
Before the calf was killed.
To guard against each dire event,
The'old May eve was yearly spent,
Partly as I have said;
But what I have yet to relate'
About this scene of ancient date,
Took place within the glade.
When now protected by each charm
All living things upon the farm;
The youthful swains would take their flight
To some commanding neighbouring height,
And set the crackling furze alight,
Which by creating such a blaze
As fairly mocked the moon's pale rays,
And well kept up till break of day,
Would scare the warlock host away (Harrison, W. (ed) 1899).

There were some rites against the evil eye which were specifically performed during Beltane, especially those dealing with cattle and belongings. For example, in Scotland it was customary to sprinkle menstrual blood on doorposts and all around the houses (Frazer, J. G. 2006, 98 footnote). Also in Scotland, branches of mountain ash decorated with heath and flowers which had been carried three times around the bonfires were placed above the houses as protection or a piece of it was cut and tied

with a thread and put on the lintel to avert the evil eye (Dalyell, J. G. 1836, 8-9). In Ireland it was sensible to sprinkle oatmeal on the cows' back and bleed the cattle and taste their blood or even bleeding people and sprinkle the ground with their blood (Wilde, F. 1890). In the Highlands, cattle were protected by putting tar behind their ears and at the root of the tail and cheese and butter were made before sunrise to keep the fairies away from the farm for the rest of the year (Campbell, J. G. 1902, 270). In the Isle of Man, if a cow was bewitched on this day, her dairy would be affected for the rest of the year (Clucas, C. L. 2006, 22).

Fire is an important element within the evil eye tradition as it will be seen in later in another chapter and it is also an essential element during the celebration of Beltane. Lighting fires at Beltane is a tradition which has not died out completely. These fires, together with those on Midsummer Eve were of great importance all across the British Isles and also in those countries where Celtic culture existed. They were believed to protect the lands from sorcery. A good example of this was the Manx custom of burning gorse bushes during this day because it was believed that witches and evil spirits would not stand the smoke (Quayle, G. E. 1950, 322). They also used to drive their cattle between two fires to protect them. This custom, although almost secret, was still performed during the twentieth century (Craine, D. 2002, 17). Taking into account the discretion of the Manx folk, the tradition probably still exists in some parts of the island. It is interesting how the lighting of bonfires was performed in Scotland. Here, before any Beltane fire was lit, all house fire must be extinguished to be lit again with burning branches from the bonfire which were known as "dealan-dé" or "brightness of the god". Animals were driven over the remaining embers to protect them and people used to dance and jump through the fire for the same reason (Mackenzie, D. A. 2010, 279). This same ritual of jumping is

performed nowadays in Galicia but on a different date: Midsummer Eve. Likewise, the Scottish folk used to get up early in the morning of Beltane so they can see the new sun dancing (Mackenzie, D. A. 2010, 279). Both Galician and Irish people used to do the same but during Easter morning or Midsummer. It seems that the Scottish are the only ones who perform this rite on Beltane.

Another important tradition during Beltane is the erection of the maypole, which is, in addition, a phallic symbol. As we have already seen, phallic symbols play an important role as protective elements. The maypole in Herefordshire (England) was decorated with red and white ribbons and set against the stable door to protect the animals from diseases, misfortune and from witches and fairies (Radford, E. & Radford, M.A. 1995, 49).

The maypole is not only a herbal element related to the evil eye which appears during Beltane. During May Eve it is customary to adorn the house with flowers which vary from one part of the British Isles to the other. Manx people usually brought kingcups (Clague, J. 2005, 28; Clucas, C. L. 2006, 24) but also leaves of elder tree and primroses (Craine, D. 2002, 19), although never broom flowers, which are believed to bring misfortune into the house. This introduces a

Figure 22 Crosh cuirn. Manx Museum. Photograph by Milagros Torrado

curious contradiction with Galician folklore, where broom flowers, known as "Maios"[31] are placed on doors and windows to guard from the evil eye. During this day (either following the old or the new calendar) the Manx also used to renew the "crosh cuirn" (a cross made of mountain ash) (fig. 22) over their doorways, which is considered a powerful safeguard. In other parts, such as Somerset, marsh-marigold and primrose were also gathered and placed on doors and stables (Baker, M. 1974, 115).

In Cornwall, during Beltane, the horseshoes must be taken down and turned, avoiding them to touch the ground (Courtney, M.A. 1890, 30). This custom seems to be only carried out by the Cornish. We can consider that this has something to do with the material of the horseshoe (iron) to which fairies are supposed to be allergic. So, a possible explanation could be that the horseshoe was turned to change the side of the iron which had been exposed during the whole year and which could have lost part of its protective power.

The whole month of May has become regarded as unlucky, from May kittens (cats born in May), which are believed to bring mice into the house; to the ill-fated people born during this month. Scottish people believed that the evil eye would fall on any couple marrying in May because Queen Mary (1542-1587) married the fourth earl of Bothwell in that month (Daniels, C. L. & Stevans, C. M. 2003, 138). This marriage caused the abdication of Queen Mary because the Scottish nobility were completely against the earl of Bothwell.

Surprisingly, on the other hand, May is the month consecrated to Virgin Mary within the Catholic tradition. The most important date is the 13th, when Our Lady of

[31] Broom flowers are referred as "maios" only during Beltane, although these flowers are exactly the same during the rest of the month.

Fatima first appeared to three children in Portugal, which, by chance, is also considered Old May Eve in some parts of England.

6.2 Easter Time

At first sight, the celebration of Easter is thought to be an undoubtedly Christian celebration. It reminds us of the death and resurrection of Christ. Nevertheless, its origin is also pagan. The word "Easter" comes from old English *ēastre* which is attributed to a goddess under the same name and whose festival was held at the spring equinox. The sense of pagan celebration has been lost but the performing of pagan rituals was unavoidable. Among them, the most important for the topic in this thesis is the making of the called hot-cross buns (fig. 23), baked on Good Friday. They were usually round spiced cakes marked with a cross dividing them in four equal parts. These are the direct descendant of the wheaten cakes eaten during the previous spring festivals offered to the Queen of Heavens or Eastre, representative of the renewal of life, and they used to have a phallic shape (Howard, C. 1909, 206-207). They are kept in the house and used in case of illness as medicine (Radford, E. & Radford, M. A. 1995, 134) but also to keep evil spirits away (Davies, J.C. 1911, 73), witches and avert the evil eye (Lewis, M 1923). The nineteenth century American

Figure 23 Hot cross bun. Photograph by Cecilia Fernández Santomé

writer Jane Goodwin Austin reflects very well the tradition of the hot cross buns in her *Dr Lebaron and His Daughters. A Story of the Old Colony* (1892), chapter 17:

> "So I am, - for your 'simballs,' "said the doctor in a plaintive voice, which made them all laugh again, while Mimy going into the butt'ry presently returned with a great piece of cheese and a plate of those fried cakes which we call dough-nuts, and which once were called symbols, because they were the survival of certain ecclesiastical dainties known in old Saxon days as Mary's cakes, cross-buns, and various emblematic forms, supposed to show a devotional intention, or to protect the eater from poison, or the evil eye

6.3 Midsummer Eve

The night of the twenty-third is an important date for witches. They used to congregate during Midsummer Eve to renew their vows to the Devil or, in Galician tradition, to plan the mischievous acts they were going to perform during the rest of the year. In Cornwall there is a place named Trewa (parish of Zennor) where witches used to meet at midnight on this day around the traditional dying fires of Midsummer. In this parish remains a group of rocks among them we find the "Wicthes' Rock" which is touched nine times at midnight to keep away ill luck and prevent the evil eye (Courtney, M. A. 1890, 41).

It was also important to gather the called Saint John's herb during this day so it could be used as a protective device against the influence of evil eyes (Mackay, R. C. 1997). It is considered Saint Columba's favourite plant, well-known for appearing in charms against the evil eye. In the Isle of Man Saint John's herb was made into

chaplets to be worn on the heads of people and animals as protection (Moore, A.W. 1891, 152). In England, it was commonly found hanging from windows to avoid the entrance of the evil eye (Wilson, R, 2002, 117). Dandelions were also traditionally picked on this eve in Dartmoor to protect people and cattle from the evil eye.

During this night great fires are lit. This tradition is still alive in many parts of the world and the old function of keeping the evil spirits away is also alive. In Scotland Midsummer bonfires were lit to ensure that the crops would be fruitful (Mackay, R. C. 1997).

It is believed that on this eve, those who are going to die are seen. This is reflected in Thomas Hardy *Life's Little Ironies: The Superstitious Man's Story* (1894):

> "You may not remember, sir, having gone off to foreign parts so young, that on Midsummer Night it is believed hereabout that the faint shapes of all the folk in the parish who are going to be at death's door within the year can be seen entering the church. Those who get over their illness come out again after a while; those that are doomed to die do not return."

6.4 Samhain

Samhain, Hallowe'en, All Hallows or, in Christian terms, All Saints Day marks the end of the Celtic year. Together with Beltane this is one of the most important dates within Celtic tradition. It marks the beginning of winter, but also the end of the harvest. Although nowadays it is celebrated throughout the world, the

original sense was lost and many people considered it as a custom exported from America.

The relationship between Samhain and fascination is not obvious, but some of the rituals performed during this night share some elements with it. For example, in Somerset a rowan cross was used as protection against the entrance of evil spirits. Also, travellers were advised to carry bread and salt in their pockets to avoid problems during the journey, such as the evil eye. Among these customs, the most outstanding was that performed in Lancashire. It was known as "lating" or "lighting the witches". It consisted in going about the hill carrying candles from eleven up to midnight. If the candles burned steadily they would be safe for a season, but, if they were blown by (supposedly) the witches, it was a bad omen (Baker, M. 1974, 130-131). In the Isle of Man, where Samhain is known as Hop-tu-naa, witches also play an important role. The Manx used to burn gorse to scare both witches and evil fairies (Turner, D. W. 2003, 98) as they also did during Beltane.

Fascinology in the Society and Literature of the British Isles

Milagros Torrado Cespón

7. Metals

Either for protection or for counteracting its effects, metals are very present in the evil eye belief. The most frequent are iron, and silver, either by themselves, in combination with other metals or in a particular shape which adds further symbolism to the rite carried on. We can find references to the use of metals in all across the British Isles. As it happens with pieces of glass or precious stones, one of the main reasons for using shine metals as amulets are their brightness which distracts the venomous glance of the evil eye from its objective.

7.1 Iron

Maybe the most important element made of iron used to counteract the effect of evil eye and witchcraft is the widespread horseshoe, but this material appears in more objects. In the absence of a horseshoe it was usual to see iron plates from the farm labourers' shoes fastened at the doors because they have a similar form (Lawrence, R. M. 1898, 36). Attributing anti-evil action to iron can date from the late Bronze Age, when those warriors with iron weapons were more efficacious (Craine, D. 2002, 13; Moore, A. W. 1891, 152). In Ireland, iron gives good luck. This belief is said to have its origin in a Celtic legend. This legend says that, before it was inhabited, Ireland was submerged under the sea and, every seven years, it was over it. A heavenly revelation stated that the island could only be rescued from repeated flooding if a piece of iron was thrown upon it during the brief period it was

visible. Then, an adventurer threw his sword and broke the spell. After that, Ireland could be inhabited and finding iron on it was considered as a good omen (Lawrence, R. M. 1898, 35). If, when meeting someone, a piece of old iron is thrown over the left shoulder, it will bring good luck to the finder (British Archaeological Association, 1851, 418). Iron also has the property of keeping fairies away, so it was common to place iron articles on the babies' cradles to avoid changelings. In the Isle of Man, a pair of thongs would do the job, in Northern England, hanging a carving-knife from the head of the cradle (Thompson, C. J. S. 1995, 18). In a case recorded in Scotland many years ago, a man, who had left his wife and child alone, saw how the fairies were carrying his wife. Then, he threw his knife into the air in the name of Trinity and annulled the power of the fairies, who dropped his wife in front of him (Lawrence, R. 1898, 36).

Pieces of iron also protect from the evil eye. In the Isle of Man, it was customary to put a bit of iron under the nest of geese and turkeys when hatching to prevent the evil eye (Clague, J. 2005, 52). In a Scottish example, a bunch of iron keys and water proved a good cure for an overlooked horse. The white witch took the keys she had previously dipped in water and hung them on the horse's neck. After this, she sprinkled the water over it pronouncing some special words and the horse recovered (Maclagan, R. C. 1902, 172). In the Isle of Skye, pieces of iron were buried near the main door to keep witches away (MacCulloch, M. J. 1923, 92).

Nails are another popular element used in charms. We have already seen the nail's application in witch bottles but they are also used for sticking into an animal's heart before burning it (as it can be seen in chapter 12) and in other charms. It was believed that they served as a protection if just carried on the pocket or hidden about the house (Radford, E. & Radford, M. A. 1995, 243).

Iron was also recorded in a cure of an overlooked child in the Highlands. The child recovered after drinking water into which nine painted iron instruments had been dipped (Craigie, W. A. 1898, 378). This cure is similar to that known as the "silver water cure" (see below).

7.2 Silver

Silver seems to have magical properties counteracting evil influences. All across the British Isles, the most common form of effectively killing a witch or an animal in witch form is shooting her with a silver bullet. But the use of silver also has central importance within the evil eye tradition. We will see the Lockerby and Lee Penny used against the evil eye in cattle or Luckenbooth brooches as protection for children, both items made from silver. Also, if we pay attention, most elements used either against the evil eye or as protection in general tend to be set in silver, from molucca beans to stones. Although in many instances silver appears used together with other metals (especially gold), its use on its own appears in complex rituals, especially in Scotland, and always involves the use of water. It is known in Gaelic as "Uisge air airgiod" (MacPhail, M. 1898, 86) or "burn airgid" (Herderson, G. 2007, 26) (silver water) and presents some variants. One of the most simple was recorded in Eriskay (Outer Hebrides) curing an overlooked horse. Here a woman filled a bowl with water from a boundary stream and put silver into it. After throwing it over the horse, it recovered immediately (Mackay, R. C. 1997). But this ritual has a much more elaborated version in Lochaber (Scotland), recorded by R. C. Maclagan:

> A female well advanced in life is usually the operator, and she produces from her store a silver coin, the larger the coin the better, a crown piece for choice, but if it is to be had, a silver brooch with silver interlacements in even better. Getting a wooden bicker, or earthenware bowl, she goes to the nearest running water and fills her vessel from the stream to the depth that when she dips her middle finger straight down in it the water will be as high as the second joint of the finger. Having got the water she drops the coin or brooch into it, and then makes as straight a course as she can towards the place where the one is upon whom the charm is to be wrought. She must take great care that she does not spill a drop of the water by the way, and this being accomplished the straighter the course followed the greater the omen of success. The one to be cured is now made to lie on his back – chest and neck bare- while the woman stands over him with the bowl of silver water in her left hand. Having dipped the forefinger of her right hand in the water, she makes the sign of the cross upon his forehead and in a low voice repeats an incantation. During the incantation, with her right hand she sprinkles the water on the patient seven times and as rapidly as possible. There is then only enough water left to cover the coins; this the patient is made to drink till the last drop, the bowl being tilted over till the coin touches his lips. The patient being now assured that he has been cured, is made to rise and resume his usual occupations. The words of the incantation as translated are:[32]
>
> "Trinity, and might, and mercy, Holy and most merciful to human suffering and sorrow: Ever Blessed Father, loving Son of Mary, and Oh kindly Spirit of health and healing. Expel the demon of despondency and fear out of his Thy servant who believeth in Thy word.

[32] R.C. Maclagan does not proportionate the Gaelic words.

> "Holy Apostles, twelve, and Mary mother, and meek Saint Bridget, and Saint Columba too, exquisite singer of holy hymns, good and wise, intercede for him with intercession of efficacy and power. Let relief come now, and health and peace.
> "Let the evil that afflicted him be driven by the winds afar: And let him arise in strength and hope and joy, to magnify the goodness of the most High.
> "With water of silver, from swiftly running stream I sprinkle Thee. Arise and be well" (Maclagan, R. C. 1902, 159-160).

The mention of the "silver brooch with interlacements" (probably a Luckenbooth brooch) as being more powerful than the plain silver makes reference to the fact that knots and knitted patterns are regarded as having the quality of diverting the evil eye from its objective. Nevertheless, that would make more sense if we were talking about a protective rite, not a cure. We could be before an extension of the use of interlaced objects.

Another similar example includes more than the piece of silver, but also copper. It is performed by lifting water in a wooden ladle in the name of Trinity from a stream over which both the living and the dead have crossed and without letting it touch the ground. Then silver coins and a copper coin are placed in the water blessing them with the sign of the cross. After this, the affected, either human or animal, is sprinkled with some water and the rest is dashed against a big stone which cannot be moved, transferring the evil to the rock (Henderson, G. 2007, 301). In the north of Scotland, we find the called "the gold and silver water cure". Here a shilling and a sovereign was put in some water which is later sprinkle over the affected in name of the Trinity (Radford, E. & Radford, M. A. 1949, 116). The use of coins added further symbolism to the rite, because coins had impressed the faces of kings,

who, from their status of rulers, were anciently believed to have special powers. In another Scottish example, we find gold, silver and copper, in this case to determine if the overlooker was man or woman. As before, water from a stream where the living and the dead pass is taken in a wooden ladle and a gold ring, a bit of silver and copper is placed in it. An incantation (either Christian or pagan) is recited mentioning the name of the sufferer. Then, the ladle is turned over. If the copper adhered to the ladle, the culprit was a man. If either the silver or the gold does, it is a woman (Mackay, R. C. 1997). The incantation could be the following recorded by Alexander Carmichael (Carmichael, A. 1900 vol. II, 43):

> Who shall thwart the evil eye?
> I shall thwart it, methinks,
> In name of the King of life.
> Three seven commands so potent,
> Spake Christ in the door of the city;
> Pater Mary one,
> Pater King two,
> Pater Mary three.
> Pater King four,
> Pater Mary five,
> Pater King six,
> Pater Mary seven;
> Seven pater Maries will thwart
> The evil eye,
> Whether it be on man or on beast,
> On horse or on cow;
> Be thou in thy full health this night,
> (name of the affected)
> In name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen[33]

[33] Go a thilleas cronachduinn suil?/Tillidh mise tha mi'n duil,/ann an ainm RIgh nan dul./Tri seachd gairmeachdain co ceart,/Labhair Criosd an dorush na cathrach:/Paidir Moire a h-aon,/Paidir Righ a dha,/Paidir Moire a tri,/Paidir Righ a ceithir,/Paidir Moire a coig/Paidier Righ a sia,/Paidir Moire a

This method seems to be a little unfair for women, for having two objects out of three which can accuse you gives more possibilities of being found guilty. In another Scottish version of the ritual both the silver and the gold pieces must adhere to accuse a woman (Davidson, T. 1960. 136). In other instances, a silver coin is only used. Thus, if it sticks to the bottom of the bowl, it means that the subject is affected by the evil eye, either by a male or a female (Henderson, G. 2007, 225).

Silver is also efficient to avoid the evil eye in dairy. In Yorkshire (England), dairymaids used to keep a crooked six penny to drop into the cream in case it did not come due to the influence of a witch (Baker, M. 1974, 50).

7.3 Quicksilver

Data about the use of quicksilver against the evil eye is found in Guernsey, where it is carried in small glass bottles in the pocket or hanging round the neck (MacCulloch, E. 1903, 397). The use of quicksilver against fascination could be understood by taking into account its characteristics: it is like silver, shines, it is rare and has the peculiarity of being a liquid metal.

seachd;/Tillidh seachd paidrichean Moire/Cronachduinn suil,/Co dhiubh bhitheas a air duine no air bruid,/Air mare no aire are;/Thusa bhi na d'h-ioma shlainte noehd,/(An t-ainm)/An ainm an Athar, a Mihic,'s an Spioraid Naimh. Amen.

7.4 Gold

Although gold is often used in the "silver cure", in West Ross-Shire (Scotland) existed the "gold cure" or "Uisge Or", which consisted on putting a gold article in a bowl of water and washing the affected with it (Maclagan, R. C. 1902, 166). Nevertheless, gold can be considered as a good protective device due to both its shining and value.

7.5 Bronze

In a case recorded in Ireland, a woman used bronze to counteract the evil eye which had fallen on one of her cows. She was told to place three bronze articles in a tin can and ask the one supposed to have casting the evil eye to milk three streams from the cow upon them and thus get rid of the ill influence (Wood-Martin, W. G. 1902, 285).

7.6 Bells

Bells, whatever the metal they were made of, had the primary objective of keeping evil spirits away from the church, but this has been forgotten (Clague, J. 2005, 28). As a result, bells are also used to keep evil eye away, as it is the case when held from the cattle's necks (Guiley, R. E. 1989, 37).

7.7 Blacksmiths

Blacksmiths are treated as powerful men maybe due to the fact they can handle solid metals at their will but also because they are men of considerable physical strength. They were held in great esteem by the Celts, who considered that they have special powers and were able to heal their fellows (Ross, A. 2000, 98). As a consequence, they were also feared. Saint Patrick was believed to say the following prayer to be protected:

> Against snares of demons,
> Against black laws of heathens,
> Against spells of women, smiths, and druids (Moore, A. W. 1891, 77)

As a result, blacksmiths were believed to have the power to injure the others. They could perform malefic actions if they turned their anvils upside down and say evil words over it (Gregory, L. 1992, 275).

We can see examples of blacksmiths curing children affected by the evil eye. The same technique, with some minimal changes, is seen in many parts of the British Isles. But, to perform this ritual, the blacksmith should be of seventh generation. The affected child is laid on the anvil and the blacksmith pretends that he is going to hit the child.

There were important characters in mythology who were blacksmiths. This was the case of Vulcano or the Cyclops, who were considered the first blacksmiths. In Irish tradition, Lugh, the sun god, was also believed to master this craft. The blacksmith were those who forge weapons indispensable to triumph in the battlefield. Probably, it is due to this reason that they were considered superior among other human beings.

Fascinology in the Society and Literature of the British Isles

Milagros Torrado Cespón

8. Liquids

The use of liquids in charms is more than frequent. Water needs no justification to be used, as it is a natural giver of life. In the case of body fluids (urine, blood, saliva) we are fighting the evil eye with contraries, that is, body fluid represent life and the evil eye represents destruction and, therefore, death. Nevertheless, all these elements deserve a closer look in order to understand their beneficial properties.

8.1 Water

The magic properties of water are present in all cultures: there is no life without it because water represents life itself. Thus, it is not surprising that many charms against the effects of fascination need water to be performed. Water is also a purifying agent which symbolically washes the evil from the sufferer (as it happens with baptism) but also literally. Sometimes, the evil eye could be disguising an infectious illness which could be easily mitigated with a proper personal hygiene. On the other hand, water symbolizes an important contrary to fire. Although fire is also used against the evil eye, it also means a representation of the primary agent which originated it, the sun, as it will be explained later on, so it fights the evil eye by means of equivalents in the same way an eye does.

Water was regarded as a safeguard against disease in general, for no disease could cross a river and even spirits and ghosts could not do so either (Moore, A.

W.1885), this also includes the power of the evil eye (Carmichael, A. 2007, 614). It is interesting to note that the Manx also believed that when gathering the dust under the feet of the evil eye beholder (a very common practice there), this dust would be of no use if the person had crossed over water (Crellin, J. C. 1889, 170).

We can also consider another theory concerning the use of water which has to do with the otherworld of Celtic mythology: the Tir-na-n'Og. The Tir-na-n'Og was an island thought to be situated on the other side of the ocean before America was discovered. This, as Dr. Ramón Sainero quotes from Rutherford was "the Land of Youth, where the sun beams fall dappled through the leaves of trees, where birds sing, and streams tinkle in an endless summer's afternoon" (Sainero, R. 2009, 12). To justify the relationship between the water used against the evil eye and the Tir-na-n'Og, we only have to consider a basic principle: all water ends in the sea. Either by filtrations from the surface of the Earth or through rivers, water has the same meeting point in the ocean. Thus the evil eye washed from the affected would also travel to this island where this water would be purified. As this water is somehow connected with the person suffering from the evil eye, he would feel relief when it be free from all malice.

Christianity also plays an important role in this topic. The sacredness of wells and springs was earlier than the advent of Christianity and, what was worse for those trying to Christianize them, their cult was deeply rooted in society. Again, a change of names was necessary and many traditionally sacred wells were blessed with the names of Christian saints. Thus, people carried on going to these places in search of cures in the same way as before, but calling the well under another name up to the point that its original name was forgotten. Sometimes, rituals were performed when taking water from these wells. The most common was that of going before sunrise,

usually in silence. In Manx tradition, it was believed that this water must be drunk from the palm of the hand or both hands making a cup. In case the water had to be taken home, it must be done in a tightly corked container which could not be exposed or let it touch the ground (Gill, W. W. 1929, 65).

Water is used against the evil eye either on its own or in combination with other elements, usually curative stones or metals. In these cases, the water seems to acquire the beneficial power of the objects submerged in it and is usually given to drink to the affected or, if the overlooked is bathed with it, the evil would be transmitted to the water. In other cases, the water serves as a connection to the overlooker. In a Highlander example, the water is blessed and then the performer touched the ears of the affected, believing that the evil would be thus returned to the sender (Conway, D. J. 2000, 21).

Although not in all the charms recorded the origin of the water is told, there are two specific kinds of water which seem to be more efficient: water from sacred wells and water under a bridge where both the dead and the living pass or near cemeteries. Water from a sacred wells, as I have already stated, should be taken before sunrise, in silence and, sometimes, without breaking fast. Sometimes, it was necessary to leave a rag next to the well or in a nearby tree. In the Isle of Man there was a thorn tree beside a sacred well. By the beginning of the twentieth century it used to be full of rags that the visitors dipped in the water and then fasten to the tree to get a cure. About the same well, there is an account dated back to 1868 which says that "patients wishing to be cured must visit the well three times, taking a drink at the completion of each circuit, and finally depositing the rag on the thorntree" (Gill, W. W. 1929, 66). In another Manx well, we find a connection with the passing of the

dead and the living, for it was near the placement of an old keeill[34] and a forgotten burial ground. Here the water should be taken at the ebb of the tide for better results and reciting: "I lift the water for the good of (name of the affected) in the name of God, the Son, and Holy Ghost", then the water was either drunk or used to wash the affected (Gill, W. W. 1929, 68). That water from the places where the dead and the living pass symbolizes the connection with both worlds. This belief is still very strong in Galicia, where when water is required for a charm that from these places is always preferred. This belief has also been updated, as we can observe in charm recorded in the Scottish Highlands. After preparing the elements present in the ritual, the old man who recommended doing the cure asked about the precedence of the water once the overlooked child was already well. The answer he got was "out of the pipe" because "aren't the dead and the living going down the street every day?" (Craige, W.A. 1898, 378). Sometimes, it is also advisable to take this water from the backwater of the current and not let the pail used touching the ground (Mackay, R. C. 1997)

8.2 Saliva

We have already seen some instances where saliva is used against the evil eye. It is used as both a preventive and a cure in most of the countries where we can find data about fascination. Its use is also closely related to eyes because Saint Mark explained to us in the Bible chapter 8, verse 22 that Christ cured a blind man using

[34] Keeills are common in the Isle of Man. They are Christian constructions smaller than chapels.

his spittle[35]. Applying saliva to sore eyes is also a practice among Irish people, who mix it with clay from a holy well (Selare, R. 1939, 350). In ancient Greece, Theocritus (300 BC around 260 BC) had already recorded the following charm:

> Thrice on my breast, I spit to guard me safe
> From fascinating charms (Knowlson, T.S. 1994, 179)

Saliva, like water, is a fluid and, as a fluid, is a symbol of life which is something contrary to the evil eye nature. Thus, it is not surprising that spitting is considered in general the most efficacious way to avoid the evil eye together with blessing. In fact, in Ireland if you praise a horse or a cow you are given two options to avoid the evil eye to fall on it: either you say "God bless it" or spit on it (McCartney, E. S. 1992, 25). In other occasions, the blessing was not even mentioned as it was the case in Somerset, where one was advised to spit three times if "meet wi'anybody wi'a north eye" (Elworthy, F.T. 1895, 418), that is, somebody likely to have an evil eye. Anybody with a defective eye was credited with the possibility of having the power of fascination, even if you know the person very well, as was the case recorded in *The Morning Herald* in August 1839. Two women had been friends for a long time when one of them squinted and the other was afraid of the defective eye. The only solution she found was to spit three times in her friend's face every day they met (Elworthy, F. T. 1895, 418).

Spitting on the ground was also effective. In Herefordshire people used to spit on the ground and say "Satan, I defy thee" (Jackson, M. N. 1926, 72). This custom

[35] 22They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him.
23He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. When he had spit on the man's eyes and put his hands on him, Jesus asked, "Do you see anything?"
24He looked up and said, "I see people; they look like trees walking around."

also appears to be common in Scotland, as it is reflected in Robert Louis Stevenson's *Kidnapped* (1886), chapter 2:

> The woman's face lit up with a malignant anger. "That is the house of Shaws!" she cried. "Blood built it; blood stopped the building of it; blood shall bring it down. See here!" she cried again -- "I spit upon the ground, and crack my thumb at it! Black be its fall! If ye see the laird, tell him what ye hear; tell him this makes the twelve hunner and nineteen time that Jennet Clouston has called down the curse on him and his house, byre and stable, man, guest, and master, wife, miss, or bairn -- black, black be their fall!"

Spitting to prevent the evil eye derived in the practice of "eye wet" or, in Scottish Gaelic, "fliuch an t-suil" (Maclagan, R. C. 1902, 126). This method was used mainly when someone praised a child, in which case the mother wet one finger and rubbed the child's eye. The best saliva for doing this cure was that of "fasting spittle", that is, from someone who had not broken fast that day. The phrase "wet your eye" derived from this custom and we can find instances where saying that is enough to avoid the evil eye and others where the actual process is performed. Maclagan recorded some examples. One worth mention is the following:

> "A native of the Long Island was complimented by me recently on the style of her dress, and the smart appearance it gave her, when, to my surprise and amusement, stepping forward and wetting the point of her finger by putting it on her tongue, she placed the finger on my right eye saying: 'Fliuch do shuil eagal gum bi mi air mo ghonadh'. ('Wet your eye for fear that I may be wounded.') She did this very good-naturedly, and explained that when one is the subject of what he may suspect to be envious praise, either in respect of

> person or clothing, he may protect himself from consequences that might result from the Evil Eye, by performing this ceremony on the one who has done the praising" (Maclagan, R.C. 1902, 126-128).

As well as for protecting from the effects of the evil eye, saliva was used to bring good luck. The English had the custom of spitting on the money they first received (Thompson, C. J. S. 1995, 138). This practice, known as "handsel", could also be interpreted as a way of getting rid of the possible evil eye the previous owner had laid over it.

8.3 Blood

Blood sometimes appears involved when counteracting the effects of evil eye. The most common was drawing blood from above the forehead of the person who you thought has cast the evil eye. In the Borders and Scotland this practice was known as "scoring above the breath". It consisted of drawing a cross on the forehead of the suspected person with a pin or, if possible, with a horseshoe nail or, if it was performed on the victim, it was enough doing the operation with a finger (Davidson, T. 1922, 147). Sometimes the violence of this remedy was such which could bring the accused person to death. That was the case recorded in the Edinburgh Annual Register in 1814, where a shepherd suspected that a woman had overlooked his cows. He went to the old lady's house and scored her forehead so hard with a horseshoe that she died (Wickwar, J.W. 2006, 75). In England, blood was drawn from above the mouth instead of the forehead (Napier, J. 2006, 41). In Wales it was

believed that drawing blood from any body part of a witch was enough for getting rid of her influence (Davies, J.C. 1911, 242). The same happened in the Isle of Man where in a case recorded in 1695, a supposed witch was scratched on her face by the housewives who believed her to be responsible of making their butter unable to come (Craine, D. 2002, 16). Shakespeare exemplifies this practice in *Henry VI* (1623), act I, scene V:

> Here, here she comes. I'll have a bout with thee;
> Devil or devil's dam, I'll conjure thee:
> Blood will I draw on thee, thou art a witch,
> And straightway give thy soul to him thou servest.

In other instances the blood of the victim was boiled as a remedy. The ceremony must be performed at midnight either on a hot fire or just throwing the blood on the red-hot coals. Doing this and saying the appropriate incantations would cause the witch responsible to feel so much pain that she would be forced to lift the spell (Radford, E & Radford, M.A. 1995, 58). This method is connected to those which use other body fluids (urine, saliva) to counteract the effects of a curse, especially when using witch bottles as we have already seen in chapter 4.

On the other hand, women who are menstruating are believed to have the power of the evil eye due to their lack of blood (De Blécourt, W., Hutton, R. & La Fontaine, 1999, 196). Thus, during their period, women would envy those who have more of that body fluid. In general, menstruating women are thought to spoil anything they touch or even look at due to this need for more fluids.

Blood, apart from being a liquid, has the important characteristic of being red. The colour red appears frequently in combination with the use of threads but it is also worth mentioning its function as a separate item. As the colour of blood, it is a

symbol of life but also the colour which represents the phallic god Priapus. For the Scottish it is the colour of gods and red berries were regarded as the fruits of gods as those which were once protected by the dragon of Loch Awe (Mackay, R. C. 1997) in Fraoch Eilean, a small Scotish island, and which were believed to restore youth. It is also the sacred colour of the Nordic god Thor and, in Christian tradition, the symbol of the crucifixion (Ross, A. 2000, 87). As we can observe, the presence of red colour is much extended, so its use as a protective device is found in many other countries apart from the British Isles. For example, the Jews used to attach red ribbon called *royte baendel* to their children's underclothes or hair and also to their vehicles to protect them from the evil eye. They also used to paint the trunk of trees to prevent them from being overlooked (Jones, L.C. 1992, 153).

On the other hand, it is also considered the colour of witches and also the clothes colour of the mischievous Manx fairies which steal babies, so it is used as protection against their action mainly in cattle by the use of red threads tied to their tails or bounding rowan twigs forming crosses (Thompson, C. J. S. 1995, 218). The following charm was recited by the Scottish farmers exemplifying the use of a red thread to avoid the action of a witch:

> Lest witches should obtain the power
> Of Hawkie's milk in evil hour,
> She winds a red thread round her horn,
> And milks thru' rowan-tree night and morn,
> Against the blink of the evil-eye
> She knows each antidote to ply (Davidson, T. 1992, 146)

Those with red hair were accused of being witches or, in general, believed to be bringers of bad luck. There is an Irish proverb which says "Let not the eye of a red-haired woman rest on you." I recorded an example of this in the Isle of Man

where the "First Footer" tradition is still alive. In the Isle of Man, it is important that this person be a dark haired male to bring good luck. If he is blonde, nothing will happen but if he is red-haired, bad luck will come with him. The fact that only a dark haired man would be accepted as good luck bringer has its origin in the Viking invasions: Manx people were dark haired while Vikings, the enemies, were blonde and red. In the parish of Ballaugh, the Manx music specialist, Dr. Fenella Bazin told me that when she was a child she and her family were waiting for an uncle to arrive during New Year's morning. The problem was that her uncle was red-haired and he was going to be the first footer. In order to avoid bad luck for the rest of the year, they solved to go to the stable and take a dark horse into the house, so that the first footer or "Qualtagh" was a dark-haired male.

We can also find a reference to the ill omen that represented finding a red-haired person in the chapter 11 of the novel *Haunted Ground* (2003), by the American, although closely linked to Ireland, Erin Hart:

> My father always said meeting a red-haired woman at the gate was terrible bad luck. Ah, you never know but they might have powers. With cures and curses, the evil eye and such.

Another example is provided in an article about the Irish white witch Biddy Early (Schmitz, N. 1977, 175) where a man recurred to her when her son fell ill. She told him that the responsible had been a red-haired woman who had not blessed the child.

8.4 Urine

Urine has always been used in remedies to cure worms, ague, menstrual problems, fevers, chilblains or sore skin but it was also a widespread method against the action of witches because it was believed that it facilitated a link between the victim of the evil spell and the culprit. We can find it in witch bottles, but also sprinkled over domestic animals as a protection, as we can see in several examples in different parts of this thesis. But the use of urine must have a reason. As it was explained before, it is a vital fluid, although it is something that our body expels, so it represents the person. It is interesting that explanation given by Joseph Balgrave in his *Astrological Practice of Physick...* to justify the use of urine and blood against witches:

> The reason why the Witch is tormented, when the blood or urine of the patient is burned is because there is part of the vital spirit of the Witch in it, for such is the subtlety of the Devil, that he will not suffer the Witch to infuse any poysonous matter into the body of man or beast, without some of the Witches blood mingled with it (Balgrave, J. 1998, 155).

If someone suffered the effects of the evil eye, the curse could be broken by boiling some of the victim's urine, usually adding nail and /or hairs (Radford, E. & Radford, M.A. 1995, 347) or by corking it in the already mentioned witch bottles. Boiling it with nail pairings and hairs was also efficacious. This method was recorded in 1682 in the London Courts. Here a woman was accused of killing a five-year-old girl with her evil eye and bewitching her mother. Her father consulted a doctor who advised him to use his wife's urine to cure her and discover the evil doer.

After doing so, he heard the voice of the accused screaming at his door and the next day she was swollen and bloated[36]. Sprinkling it was one of the easiest methods. In Scotland it was once customary to sprinkle the house with urine which had been gathered for a few days when a child was born and thus protect him from the evil eye in this vulnerable stage of his life (Gifford, E. S. 1958, 66). In other instances, the urine is baked into a cake. In a case recorded in Yorkshire in 1683, an overlooked man was cured by means of cake made of his urine, hair, wheat meal and horseshoe stumps which was tossed in a fire (Guiley, R. E. 1989, 346).

The Irish writer Seán O'Crohan exemplified the keeping of urine in his novel *A Day in Our Life* (1969), part two (*Midday*)

> Mártan was never well when he was helping someone else out, but if work for himself is involved, on a day of stacking corn or hay-making, say, there is no hero to match him. But, once he has that done, he will spend a couple of days in bed shamming illness and keeping out of the way of the evil eye. The stale of every ass, the droppings of every dog, and all kinds of old urine are stored away in bottles and old pots by them

[36] The Proceedings of the Old Bailey, reference: t16820601a-11.

9. Plants

The role played by certain plants within the evil eye tradition is a very important factor in all those cultures where it is present. This means that the plants included in this chapter can be found in other parts of the world, but I decided not to explain their application in other countries so I could centre only in the British Isles. Some of them have reached the British Isles thanks to the Roman influence. The use of one plant and no other is not the result of chance, but the heritance of old rituals sometimes difficult to trace. As it happens with other elements related to fascination, the plants involved have more properties than those of fighting against the evil eye. The use of some plants seems to be widespread across the British Isles, while others appear to be of confined to specific parts in the islands. Sometimes, there are problems of nomenclature because, being these plants considered as medicinal and of common use, only the local or dialectic name is usually provided. In other cases, the importance of the plant has to do with the date in which it is used, mainly during May Eve.

9.1 Artemisia (Artemisia vulgaris)

Although all are an appropriate safeguard against fascination, there are three types of artemisia (*Artemisia vulgaris*, *Artemisia monoclonos* and *Artemisia leptefilos*) but all of them are usually known as "mugwort". The herbal treatise *Agnus Castus* explains in the fifteenth century:

> Arthemisia is an herbe that men clepe Mugwourth (...). The vertu of this herbe is that quo-so go ony weye and he bere this herbe on hym he schall not be wery in hys gate. Also gif this herbe be in mannys hous. Ther schal dwel non wicked gost ne non wycked spiritus (Meaney, A. L. 1981, 46).

It was used to prevent leg-weariness, so that is why it was taken by the people who started a journey who thought it would also protected them from being overlooked, as it happens when placed over the door (Westropp, T. J. 1922, 45; American Medical Association, 1912, 91: Clague, J. 2005, 49). During Beltane, it was customary in the Isle of Man to draw slide-carts of mugwort from place to place to expel evil spirits (Clague, J. 2005, 28). In Anglo-Saxon leech craft was highly estimated and it was said that:

> Thou art good against venom,
> And against vile things that fly,
> Mighty against the loathed ones
> That rove through the land (American Medical Association, 192, 99).

If we take a look at its popular medical applications, we find something totally different. It was used to ease giving birth and can provoke and regulate menstruation (Font Quer, P. 1980, 816). Giving birth is obviously related to fertility and, as a consequence, it is the contrary of the effects of the evil eye. Thus, artemisia is equally considered as a good amulet against fascination.

9.2 Ash Tree (Fraxinus excelsior)

Apart from being one of the most common plants used against the action of the evil eye, the ash tree (fig. 24) is used in other remedies. For example, in Wales, children with rickets were passed through a cleft in the trunk of an ash tree. In Cornwall it was used for the same but the technique was different: a cleft is made

Figure 24 Ash tree. Photograph by Milagros Torrado Cespón

through the trunk of a young ash tree and two men keep it open so the mother of the ill child can pass it through it three times and then the child was washed in the dew from the ash leaves for three mornings (Thompson, C. J. S. 1995, 26).

Its leaves and wood are very efficacious against witchcraft and evil in general, although they used to make their brooms of ash branches (Thompson, C. J. S., 1995, 223). In Lincolnshire (England), when the female ash (called there "shedder") is berried, it is use specifically against female witches. In Scotland, it was believed that if you ate its red buds, you would be invulnerable to the action of

witches (Napier, J. 1879). Its seeds, known as "ash keys", are popular in Scotland and northern England as protection against the evil eye. Ash leaves, in addition, proportionate also success and happiness if found and worn in the hat or buttonhole or in the pocket, especially if they are even. When picking them, it was recited:

> Even ash, I do thee pluck
> Hoping thus to meet good luck
> If no good luck I get from thee,
> I shall wish thee in the tree (Radford, E. & Radford, M. A. 1995, 20-23)

Even or not, the ingestion of ash leaves can have a very different result, for they have laxative properties (Font Quer, P. 1980, 741).

The curative powers of the ash tree could be magnified by burying horseshoes under them, as it was recorded in Lincolnshire (England). The twigs from these ash trees were especially efficacious for curing bewitched cattle (Lawrence, R. 1898, 89).

It is also an important tree in Norse mythology, where it is considered as the "world tree" which links the underworld with this world (Alexander, M. 2002, 10). Also in Norse mythology it is say that the god Odin found two tree trunks on the seashore and converted them in the first man and woman. It is believed that at least the man's trunk was of ash (Baker, M. 2008, 29).

9.3 Birch (Betula verrucosa)

Generally across the British Isles, its branches are believed to have great power against the evil eye when brought into the house or just when placed over it. The same purpose is achieved in people when small twigs are worn in hats and buttonholes (Guiley, R. E. 1989, 49). In Wales the birch occupies a important place in tradition. The Maypole is always made of birch, called in Welsh "bedwen", maybe because its bark can resist wetness very well (Font, Quer, P. 1980, 99), so it can last the whole year. In For the Welsh, the birch is also related to gentler emotions, so it is used in love charms (Davies, J. C. 1911, 75). In Herefordshire (England) and the counties nearby a young birch tree was propped against stable doors on May Day morning. They were decorated with red and white ribbons and left protecting the animals the rest of the year (Baker, M. 2008, 28).

9.4 Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*)

The blackthorn is employed as a cure, either by placing it under the pillow of the affected child, as it was the case recorded in Guernsey (Carey, F. & Ozanne, C. 1915, 196) or, as in Scotland, using its juice (Mackay, R. C. 1997). However, out of this beneficial use it is generally considered unlucky to bring its flowers inside the house (Watts, D. 2007, 38). Blackthorn is also related to witches, who used to make their sticks of this wood (Baker, M. 2008, 30)

In Worcestershire (England) it was customary to make a crown decorated with blackthorn on New Year's morning. This crown was then baked in the oven and

carried to the corn fields to be burnt. Once it was burnt, it was reduced to ashes and then were sprinkled over the part of the field which was first sow to guarantee the fruitfulness (Alexander, M. 2002, 25), or, in other words, to avoid the evil eye to fall on them.

9.5 Dandelion (Taraxacum officinale)

The used of this yellow flower against the evil eye is recorded in Dartmoor. Here it was customary gather its flowers on Midsummer Eve and placing them in the house and byre in order to protect people and cattle. It was also advisable to wear one of these dandelions on your clothes (Sandes, T. 2007). In Gaelic it is named "Bearnan Bride", that is, the "little notched plant of Brigit" (Baker, M. 2008, 50). This shows a connection between the Celtic goddess of fertility and the dandelion, and therefore, it also offers a connection of its use against the evil eye.

9.6 Elder Tree (*Sambucus*)

The elder tree or "trammon tree" (fig. 25), as it is named in the Isle of Man, is still very strongly considered as a protective element. Manx people tell that you can never cut one of these trees or bad luck will fall over you. In fact, in the Isle of Man I recorded a case in which a man cut an elder tree in his garden and a few months after

his house burnt down. This happened in 2009 and he blamed himself for the happening for having cut the elder tree.

In Kirkcudbrightshire (Scotland) stables were protected by a cross made of elder tree branches tied with red wool (Mackay, R. C. 1997). On the other hand, it is considered to be an unlucky tree in England because it was the tree Judas used to hang himself. In Oxfordshire (England), it was believed that if you sat under it, you would be bewitched (Wright, A. R.1900, 79). However, in Yorkshire it was used to discover if cattle were bewitched. The farmer was told to look for six knots of elder tree and place it orderly arranged under the new ashen bowl. If, after a while, they "were found in confusion", the cattle were bewitched (Henderson, W. 1879, 219). In Scotland it was believed that wherever the elder tree grew, that was a place where witches would have no power and its berries gathered on Midsummer Eve would confer protection against witches to the keeper (Napier, J. 1879) and even give him magic powers (Baker, M. 2008, 55).

Figure 25 Elder Tree in the Isle of Man. Photograph by Milagros Torrado Cespón

9.7 Fern

Figure 26 Lucky hands
http://www.luckymojo.com/luckyhand.html

In Scotland it was believed that the common fern **(***Pteridium aquilinum*) was in flower at midnight on Midsummer Eve and the one who was able to get it would be protected from the evil influences and, in addition, would know of the placement of a hidden treasure (Napier, J. 1879). Dioscórides also wrote about this ritual, but affirmed that it was the witches who went to get its seed on Midsummer Eve for their use (Font Quer, P. 1980, 61).

The male fern (*Dryopterisfilix-mas*) is used to make the known as "lucky hand" (fig. 26) is an amulet which must be done during Midsummer Eve. It consists in digging the fern root and cutting it leaving five unrolled fronds, leaving it looking like a hand. This is then smoked and hardened in one of Midsummer's fires and kept it against all type of misfortunes and the evil eye (Radford E. & Radford M. A. 1995, 227).

9.8 Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) and Witch-Hazel (*Hamamelis*)

Hazel was an important tree for ancient Celts. Its sacredness was such, that cutting down a hazel tree could mean a death sentence (Alexander M. 2002, 126). Taking into account its sacredness, is not surprising finding it used in incantation to cure the effects of the evil eye. Hazel twigs were carried in England as a protection,

especially by witch hunters (Kruger, A. 1993, 183). Hazel nuts are used as amulets against fascination. The Irish believed that double hazel nuts were especially powerful (Baker, M. 2008, 72).

The use of the witch-hazel is said to have a similar effect. In an Irish charm three witch-hazel rods are needed to known if the sufferer is affected by the evil eye, the stroke and the wind. This is a complex ritual which involves much solar symbolism. The white witch takes off his coat, shoes and stockings; rolls up his shirt sleeves and stands towards the sun praying. Then, takes a pail with water and puts it by a fire, kneels and puts the three hazel rods in to the fire until they are as black as charcoal. He keeps on praying and, when the rods are burnt, he rises and prays to the sun again crossing his hands. After this, he draws a circle on the ground with the end of one of the sticks. He stand inside the circle with the pail of water beside him and flings the threes hazel rods in it. The rod which sinks represents the evil which affects the sufferer. He prays again to the sun and grinds the sunken stick to powder. This powder is mixed with the water in a bottle and he says a prayer over it. The content of the bottle is given to be drunk at home at midnight and must be carried in silence and without letting it touch the ground (Wilde, F. 1888). In other instances, such as one occasion in Cornwall, hazel was chosen to make a fire which burnt the elements used in charms against the evil eye (Courtney, M. A. 1887, 195).

9.9 Holly (Ilex aquifolium)

It seems to be a survival of a Roman cult to Saturn which took place around the winter solstice and which nowadays we know as Christmas. Pliny stated in his

Natural History XXII, 72 that holly trees about the house prevent sorcery[37] (Baker, M. 2008, 78). It is considered a protection against evil influence in general (Napier, J, 1879), but especially against fire, lightning and the evil eye, as long as it is brought into the house during winter, otherwise, the effect would be the contrary (Howard, M. 1995, 22). Holly was considered as a good protection for horses. In Cambridgeshire coachmen chose whips with holly-wood handles (Baker, M. 2008, 78).

9.10 House-leek (Sempervivum tectorum)

This plant seems to be used as an apotropaic against the evil eye only in the Isle of Man within the British Isles, where it is called "Luss-y-thie", but its employment is also recorded in Italy. It is found on the wall near or over the door and deters the entrance of witches and evil desires (Gill, W. W. 1932, 300). It appears in England too, but with the aim of protecting the house against fire and lightning (Baker, M. 1975, 63), not against fascination.

9.11 Ivy (*Hedera*)

We can find instances of ivy used against the evil eye mostly in England, Scotland and Wales. It is believed that is it is sacred to the Roman god Bacchus, but it was also highly estimated by the Celts who considered it as a protective for dairy

[37] Aquifobia arbour, in domo aut villa sata, veneficia arcet.

and cattle. In some parts of Scotland it was used to make a ring which was later placed in the stable door and under the vessels in the milk house to avoid the evil eye (Carmichael, A. 2007, 421). If ivy grows strongly on a house, it will protect the indwellers from fascination; on the contrary, it is considered as a bad omen if it grows in the churchyard (Baker, M. 2008, 83).

9.12 Juniper (Juniperus communis)

It is a common protection in cattle but it has more uses, as it can be observed in the saying that must be pronounced when pulling it by the roots with the five fingers:

> I will pull the bounteous yew
> Through the five bent ribs of Christ,
> In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
> Against drowing, danger, and confusion (Campbell, J. G. 1902, 105) [38]

This saying exemplifies again the influence of Christianity in popular remedies probably when their members realized that the pagan use of juniper could not be eradicated.

On the other hand, juniper was also used by herbalists in infusions as a revitalizing for the elderly (Alexander, M. 2002, 152). Attributing it this revitalizing power is a way of proving as a good remedy against any destructive influence as it is the case of fascination.

[38] Buainidh mis' an t-iubhar àigh / roimh chòig aisneam croma Chriosd /an ainm an athar, a Mhic, 's an Spioraid Naoimh / air bháthadh, air ghàbhadh, 's air ghriobhadh.

9.13 Luss-Yn-Aacheoid or Purple Medow (Thalictrum dasycarpum)

This plant known as the "Plant of Sickness" or purple meadow was used as a protective device in the Isle of Man (Moore, A. W. 1891, 152). It is used seems to be exclusive to the Isle of Man, although I do not deny the possibility of finding it in the other parts of the British Isles.

9.14 Marsh Marigold (*Caltha palustris*)

Also known as "king cup", it is used in some parts of England and the Isle of Man as "May flower" to give protection to the dwelling of both animals and people (Clague, J. 2005, 28). On the other hand, it is considered unlucky bringing it into the house before Beltane (Baker, M. 2008, 97).

9.15 Molucca Beans (Caesalpinia crista)

The use of molucca beans or Saint Mary's nut against the evil eye seems to be only existent in the northern islands of Scotland. Nevertheless, their use is difficult to trace because they receive several names and different spellings. Molucca beans are round white seeds which were usually tied to children's necks as protection against the evil eye. If it turned black, the child was believed to have been overlooked (Martin, M. 1716, 38). They are not an indigenous plant on this island, but it reaches their coasts after travelling from the Spice Islands (Ross, A. 2000, 84).

Maybe due to its exotic character, its supposed power is emphasized by the population.

In 1825 the use of mollucca beans was also recorded in Ireland. There they were placed under pillows to avoid the presence of fairies (Black, G. F. 1893, 482). This use, although not specifically against fascination, shows how people attributed special powers to these seeds.

9.16 Oak Apples

Although the oak was an important tree for the Celts, what was found in a charm is the oak apple. It is used to determine if a child has been affected by the evil eye. Three oak apples are taken and put in a bowl of water placed under the child's cradle while everybody keeps silent. If they float, he is fine; if not, he has been bewitched (Guiley, R. E. 1989, 252).

9.17 Rowan Tree or Mountain Ash (*Sorbus aucuparia*)

The importance of rowan (fig. 27) is already implicit in its name, which is said to come from the old Norwegian word *runa*, meaning *charm* (Alexander, M. 2002, 240). In Wales, rowan is believed to have been used to build the cross of Jesus (Howard, M. 2009, 88). It was used as protection for cattle as it can be seen in chapter 12. For example, in Devonshire (England), pigs were protected with mountain ash twigs round their necks. During the eighteenth century in Selkirk it was

recorded how a farmer pierced and decorated the ears of each new cow with rowan tree and a red thread before enter it into the byre (Davidson, T. 1992, 146). On Beltane, the Manx made and renew their "Crosh Cuirn", a cross made from mountain ash and tied with loaghtan[39] fleece without using a knife or any other metallic instrument (Clucas, C. L. 2006, 20-21). The Scots also used to wear rowan crosses (Dalyell, J. G. 1836, 401) or to plant or nail rowan at the doors of their houses to protect them (Baker, M. 1975, 63; Ross, A. 2000, 65) and pass their lambs through loops or rowan to guard them from the evil eye (http://electricscotland.com).

Figure 27 Rowan tree. Photograph by Manuel Pose Carracedo

In Somerset, protective rowan twigs were still placed over door on Samhain and Beltane in 1960's (Howard, M. 2009, 88). In Angus (Scotland) this was performed on Holy Rood day eve (third of May), where the rowan twig was also bounded round with red thread (Black, G. F. 1893, 478).

9.18 Rue (Ruta graveolens)

It is used to counteract and protect from the evil actions of witches in general. Its use is not confined to the British Isles, as it appears with this same use all across

[3939] Loghtan sheep wool, a type of sheep with brown wool which can be find in the Isle of Man.

Europe. Although it is efficient enough if used alone, its influence increases when it is worn together with agrimony or maiden-hair, acquiring the power of preventing spell and indicating the presence of witches (Thompson, C. J. S. 1995, 219)

9.19 Saint John's Wort (*Hypericum perforatum*)

Saint John's wort is a plant that can also be related to Christianity. It is identified as Saint Columba's favourite flower. As its name indicates, it also plays an important role during Midsummer celebrations when it is usually gathered. In Scotland it was believed to protect against the evil eye but also against the death itself (Mackay, R. C. 1997). Mackay also explains that it "was worn beneath the left armpit of the bodies of women and in a similar place in the underwear of men" (Mackay, R. C. 1997) and it cannot be sought to be efficient, but being stumbled on by accident. As well as Saint Columba, it was also considered as a good protection for cattle. In *Carmina Gadelica* we find the following charm:

> Saint John's wort, Saint John's wort,
> My envy whosoever has thee,
> I will pluck theen with my right hand,
> I will preserve thee with my left hand,
> Whoso findeth thee in the cattle fold,
> Shall never be without kine (Carmichael, A. 2007, 284)

This plant was very popular during the Middle Ages among inquisitors. It was known as *Fuga daemonum* because, when placed in the mouth of a witch, she would confess her evil acts, although this was done because of the toxicity of the plant (Gómez Fernández, J. R. 1999, 64).

9.20 Turf[40]

It was used in Gloucestershire (England) against the malice of evil people. The subject had to place it under the hat and thus being "over the sod and under the sod" at the same time (Radford E. & Radford M. A. 1995, 148). In the Western Highlands its use was similar to those of witch bottles and animals' hearts: a square of turf is stuck with pins and placed in the fire making the overlooker feel a terrible pain (Maclagan, R. C. 1902, 9).

9.21 Verbena or Vervain (*Verbena officinalis*)

In some parts of Britain it is known as the "holy herb" because it is believed that it was used to treat the wounds of Christ at crucifixion. Because of this, it was customary make the sign of the cross when picking it (Alexander, M. 2002, 305). In the Isle of Man this was used to protect humans and animals from fascination. It was even given as food to pigs to a better action (Clague, J. 2005, 49). It is also very good for protecting babies up to the point that they would not be taken outside without a bit of it in their clothes[41]. Its good qualities against the evil eye were even recognized by the *British Pharmacopoeia* in 1837, which advise to tie its root with a white satin ribbon and wear it as a necklace as a protection against infection and evil influences (Baker, M. 2008, 153).

[40] As it is of vegetal origin, turf is included here.
[41] Folk Life Suvey, reference K/19-A 16/6/1950

It was equally efficacious against witchcraft. A man in Anglesey once shot a witch in the form of a hare by wrapping a silver bullet in verbena so he could be sure of hurting her (Howard, M. 2009, 47). On the other hand, it also had uses as a cure for strumous ulcerations in East Norfolk where its root was hung on the neck of the suffered (American Medical Association, 1912, 85). In Lancashire there is a saying about this herb which dates back to the time of Queen Elizabeth I:

> All-hele, thou holy herb, Vervin,
> Growing on the ground;
> In the Mount Calvary
> There wast thou found;
> Thou helpest many a grief,
> And stanchest many a wound.
> In the name of sweet Jesus
> I take thee from the ground.
> O Lord, effect the same
> That I do now go about (Harland, J. & Wilkinson, T. T. 1867, 76).

9.22 Willow (Salix alba)

In some parts of Britain, willow branches are believed to protect the indwellers of a house if brought on May Day morning, especially if brought by a friend (Radford, E. & Radford, M. A. 1995, 364).

9.23 Combination of Plants

Sometimes, the above plants are used in combination, maybe in an attempt to obtain better protection. In Dartmoor people used to hang garlands of flowers and bunches of berries o protect their animals (Gordon, R. 1973, 156). These berries, although not specified in the text, were almost for sure red, a colour of great importance within the evil eye tradition as we have already seen. This was the case with the ivy and rowan three-plied wreaths made in Scotland which were placed on the entrance of houses and stables to prevent the evil eye (Mackay, R. C. 1997) In the Isle of Man evil spirits and fairies are kept away with bunches of nettles and yarrow (Clague, J. 2005, 49). In Guernsey a common an amulet consisted in a bag made from new linen filled with several herbs: nine bits and two sprig of green broom tied together as a cross, nine morsels of elder, nine leaves of betony, nine of agrimony, a little bay salt, salammoniac, new wax, barley, leaven, camphor and quicksilver enclosed in cobbler's wax (MacCulloch, 1903, 394).

10. Numbers

In all cultures there some numbers which bear special significance. Isidore of Seville was conscious of the importance of numbers when he said "Tolle numerum omnibus rebus et omnia pereunt"[42] (Schimmel A. M. 1993, 19). They are used in matters dealing with religion, but also in pagan rituals. Numerals are so interesting due to their infiniteness. They allow the human being to measure anything and, as a consequence, to establish order within chaos.

If we take a look at all the charms and amulets included in this thesis, we realize that the numbers three and nine appear to have an important meaning. Other numbers like four and seven are also worth mentioning. Within these, number three can be considered the most symbolic of them all.

10.1 Three

The use of number three appear in different testimonies of the British Isles, but also in many other parts where the evil eye tradition exists. In fact, three is a number with a special significance within many other aspects. Doctor Brinton (Brinton, D. G. 1894, 43) considered that number three derived "its sacredness from abstract, subjective operation of the intelligence, and has its main application in the imaginary and non-phenomenal world". It is the first prime number; it is plural, but still indivisible. It also represents the triangle, which use was recorded as a protection

[42] Take numbers out of everything and all of them will perish.

against the evil eye in Roscommon (Wilde, W. 1850). Its most common role is that of repeating processes (bathing three times, doing so for three days) but also it is usually the number of items needed to make an amulet or to perform a cure, as it appears in many examples. One of them is that performed in Scotland when the new moon appeared. It consisted of turning three times in the pocket the coin known as "peighinn pisich" or "lucky penny" to avert the evil eye (Mackay, R. C. 1997). Sometimes three elements are believed to play a role when talking about the evil eye: eye, heart and mouth. We can observe this in an Irish charm:

> Three who saw me and did not bless me –
> The eye, the heart, and the mouth;
> The Three whom I placed to protect me –
> The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.[43]

Although the symbolism of number three could be explained from the point of view of many cultures, it has its own significance within the British Isles, where it is common to hear the idiom "best things come in threes".

The best known use of three as an important number nowadays is perceived in Christianity, but the existence of trinities was already present in the British Isles before the advent of the new religion. In Celtic tradition, gods and specially goddess appeared in triads. But three is also related to the sun, the most antique deity. The course of the sun is divided into three parts: sunrise, noon and sunset. These naturally divide the day and work as a reference for daily affairs (getting up, having lunch and rest). These points also serve as a reference for performing some charms against the evil eye, either doing them before sunrise or sunset, when it was indicated to gather herbs and water from sacred wells.

[43] An Triur a chonnaic mé agus nár bheannuigh mé – / an t-suil, an croidhe, agus an beul; / an Triur a chuir mise do mo chosaint – / an t-Athair, an Mac, agus an Spiorad Naomh.

10.2 Four

Professor Annemarie Schimmel names it as "the number of material order" (Schimmel, A. 1993). Although number four does not appear explicitly mentioned in charms against the evil eye, it does have an important role: four are the paths needed for a crossway where rites are performed, four are the arms of the cross, either pagan or Christian and four are the corners of the house. The famous four-leaf clover is also regarded as a potent amulet for any type of misfortune, including the evil eye. But the symbolism of four goes beyond: four are the phases of the moon, the cardinal points and the four seasons of the year.

Its use in repetitions in charms against the evil eye is not very common. Sometimes we can find references to rituals being done "three or four times" (Thompson, C. J. S. 1995, 147) which could suggest that the informer had forgotten the original number. Four is also the number of those believed to cast the evil eye in the following Scottish charm:

> Four to work sickness with evil eye,
> Man and woman, youth and maid;
> Three to repel ill will,
> Father and Son and Holy Spirit (Carmichael, A. 2007, 384).

10.3 Six

The main characteristic of number six is its relationship with three. Six symbolizes an enhanced three and, therefore, it can be considered of the same

importance. But, moreover, number six had an additional meaning: six was the number of days God needed to create the world.

Figure 28 George 3rd sixpence (1816). Photograph created by the United Kingdom Goverment

Number six in charms and amulets against the evil eye appears in the making of threads, either in the number of strands used to confection it or in the number of knots it has. Nevertheless, this can be interpreted as an extended use of number three. Six also appears when a coin is required. The one chosen is usually a sixpence (fig. 28), maybe because it is made of silver, maybe because of it is an unusual figure for a coin, or even because of both characteristics.

10.4 Seven

Pythagoreans considered seven as the "vehicle of human life, for there were seven days, seven planets, seven metals, and seven ages of man" (Thompson, C. J. S. 1995, 263). The importance of number seven in the British Isles could be considered an influence of Christianity, within which it bears a special significance: we can talk about the seven deadly sins, the seven sacraments or the seven archangels.

The basilisk, the already mentioned animal with the power of killing with its glance, was believed to have been born from the egg of a seven-year-old cock. Within the tradition of the British Isles, the seventh child of the same sex born in

succession (Dalyell, J. G. 1836, 395) or the seventh child of a seven child was credited with special power from the faculty of the second sight to the ability to perform cures. Also, those blacksmiths of seventh generation were the ones chosen for curing, among other illnesses, the evil eye.

More specifically within fascination, number seven appears in few examples. For instance, in Sutherlandshire (Scotland), seven pebbles from a spring are needed to perform the silver water cure (Maclagan, R. C. 1902, 168). In a Scottish charm against the evil eye, the affected is sprinkled seven times with water. The most probable is that the original number was nine, but due to the presence of Christian symbols within the evil eye tradition, it was finally changed to seven.

10.5 Nine

Nine is another multiple of three, what is more, is a triad of triads, and, therefore, already has an inherited mysticism, as Shakespeare exemplifies in *Macbeth*, act 1, scene III:

> Thrice to thine, and thrice to mine,
> And thrice again, to make up nine.
> Peace! The charm's wound up.

Nevertheless, it seems to have its own role by itself. A common English saying represents the highest degree of happiness as being "on cloud nine" and cats are said to have nine lives. The scholar John Graham Dalyell gives some instances in which nine is used in Scottish rituals:

> nine enchanted stones were cast or laid for destruction of the crop: nine ridges were passed over in the course of a mystical ceremony: a cat was drawn nine times through the crook of a chimney: and a woman was drawn nine times back and forward by the leg for a cure (Dalyell, J. G. 1836, 392).

For Highlanders it was also once customary to prepare the Beltane cake with nine square knobs. It was also said that during the seventeenth century a curious ritual was performed to cure a child from the called "cake mark" which involves both number three and nine. It consisted in nine maidens and nine married women baking three cakes from nine portions of meal. Each cake was holed and the child passed through them thrice (Dalyell, J. G. 1836, 394).

In Manx tradition, nine was considered as the most potent number. It is said that Mannanan, the founder god of the Isle of Man, has a house with nine doors, identifying him with a solar cult because in Scottish mythology the sun was believed to have nine doors, although this number was later changed to seven (Mackay, R. C. 1997). The same was said of Conchobar[44]'s house (Hopper, V. F. 2000, 208). The Manx considered that walking nine times around a hill, a standing stone or an old site was necessary to perform certain rituals. If nine sips of water from a sacred well were taken, their health would be restored (Gill, W. W. 1932, 299).

The Celts Cymrians established in Wales used number nine in both their daily life and as well as in legal issues. It was necessary to count nine steps to measure distances: fire can be lit nine steps from a house and if a dog has bitten someone, it can be sacrificed at the same distance from the owner's house. Even more, an attack

[44] Conchobar mac Nessa was a mythological king of Ulster who frequently appears during the tales of the Ulster Cycle (Mackillop, J. 2004, 88).

was not considered as such unless there was a nine-one proportion (Schimmel, A. M. 1993, 172).

Number nine is also related to fascination through its meaning within fertility: nine months is the period of gestation of a woman. Thus nine becomes a symbol of life contrary to the deadly nature of the evil eye. This symbolism is still present in a Galician custom performed in A Lanzada (Pontevedra). Women go to the beach, enter into the sea and remain there until they receive nine waves. By doing this, the probabilities of falling pregnant are believed to increase. The ninth wave is highly estimated in the entire Celtic world, where is believed that waves always come in groups of nine (Alberro, M. 2002, 27). In an Irish tale, the crew of ship sailed until they overcome the ninth wave, because they believed that the epidemic illness which was threaten the isle could never go beyond the ninth wave (Alberro, M. 2002, 27).

Nine appears in several charms present in this thesis, especially in the number of elements used in remedies: nine knots, nine straws, nine needles or nine pieces of iron. It also is number of times the "Witches rock" of Zennor (Cornwall) is touched to prevent the evil eye or the number of toads you need to bury in Derbyshire to acquire the powers of fascination.

11. Other Important Elements

Including all the elements present in the evil eye tradition is an almost impossible task. This would mean visiting all the hamlets and villages in the British Isles arming oneself with patience and asking all the inhabitants because there are many variants of the same procedures even in the same places. In spite of that, there will always be elements which have been modified or forgotten. Here I decided to include those elements which have not appeared frequently mentioned alongside this thesis but which has the same importance as the more popular or which are not included in those chapters dealing with elements which share a particular feature. In this chapter I have also included a section dealing with fire. Fire is present in most of the celebrations of pagan origin in the British Isles and is also closely linked with fascination.

11.1 Blue

In the chapter dealing with liquids, I talked about the colour red being related to blood. But blue is also an important colour when counteracting or protecting against the evil eye, although is not common in the British Isles today. The most well-known use of blue within fascination appears in Turkey, where we can easily find blue eye amulets as the most common anti-evil eye amulets. The power attributed to this eye derives from the belief that blue eyes were those with the power of fascination, mainly because it was not a common colour among the inhabitants of

Turkey. Therefore, the Turkish blue eye (fig. 29) was used as a preservative against the action of malefic glance by the use of an equivalent. Its employment has nowadays crossed frontiers and it is easy finding them in any part of the world and, although it has never been a common amulet in the British Isles, it is also employed there nowadays. In spite of the fact its original sense as a protection against the evil eye has not been lost yet, some sellers attribute other qualities to it depending on the colour. Therefore, a red Turkish eye would be a love charm; a yellow one would proportionate good health and so on.

Colour blue is also important within the tradition in the British Isles. We can find it in beads, witch balls and snakestones used as amulets. But the reason why blue is used as an apotropaic has not been stated yet. From my point of view two explanations are plausible. The first has to do with the fact that finding blue stones is complicated; therefore, finding a blue bead is the same as finding a four-leaf clover, if no more difficult. Moreover, if we add that beads shine, we have an amulet which distracts the effect of the evil eye with its shining and unusual colour. However, this explanation does not provide blue beads with any special characteristic on their own. On the other hand, if we pay attention to the blue beads found in England, we notice that they were found in burials dating back to the Bronze Age, that is, 2,500 till 800 BC. This period of time is given us the clue for a

Figure 29 Turkish blue eye amulet. Photograph by Milagros Torrado Cespón

new theory. A recent study (Eiberg, H. *et al*, 2007) has traced the origin of the first human blue eyes in the Earth and has dated them around 10,000 or 6,000 years ago, due to a mutation in a gene. This means that, during Bronze Age, the presence of a blue-eyed individual in any part of the British Isles was as extraordinary as in Turkey, and, therefore, easily identified as an evil eye beholder. With the passing of time, and due to the arrival of civilizations were the mutation of the gene has been more frequent (Celts, around 800 BC; Anglos, Saxos and Jutes, around the end of the fourth century AD; Vikings, around the end of the eighth century AD), blue eyes started to be frequent in the British Isles and, as a consequence, too common to be feared.

11.2 Dust

The following examples of charms to counteract the evil eye seem to be exclusive to the Isle of Man. At least, I could find neither written evidence nor verbal testimony of this practice recorded in any other part of the British Isles with the same purpose. It consists of employing the dust or earth under the overlooker's feet or from a cross road as a cure. The closest equivalent could be the one recorded in Wales by Reverend Elias Owen in 1887 (Owen, E. 1896, 248):

> Mr. Roberts, Plas Einion, Llanfair D. Clwyd, a very aged farmer, told me that when a certain main or cock fighting had been arranged, his father's servant man, suspecting unfair play, and believing that his master's birds had been bewitched, went to the churchyard and carried therefrom a quantity of consecrated earth, with which he slyly sprinkled

> the cock pit, and thus he averted the evil, and broke the spell,
> and all the birds ought, and won, according to their deserts.

In Manx tradition we can find several variants of the use of dust. The most common is gathering the dust from the spot the evil eye beholder stood (Rhys, J. 2007, 246). Frazer explains that it was generally believed all over the world that by injuring footprints, you would also injure that person's feet (Frazer, J. G. 1890, 157). Equally efficient is the dust from a cross road. By the beginning of the twentieth century, in Ballachrink (Isle of Man), there was a woman who used to go down the bridge to collect some dust and then put it on her husband to counteract the effects of the evil eye (Clague, J. 2005, 51). On other occasions, the chosen dust is that from a point the lands of three proprietors met or "Ooir ny three cagleeyn". There was a spot at Dalby where a pit had been made by those who went there to gather earth to counteract the evil eye (Cashen, W. 2005, 69). When this dust was applying to the sufferer, animal or person, it was usually done in the name of Trinity.

In other Manx instances, when it was not possible to gather the dust under the overlooker's feet or field, any other element belonging to him would have the same effect (Gill, W. W. 2002, 328). This practice is most common to the rest of the British Isles, where getting possession of one of the overlooker properties establishes a link with him and, thus, if harm is done to that belonging, the culprit also suffers the consequences.

Dust was also regarded as a bringer of good luck for the Manx. In 1677, a woman was accused of taking the dust from her neighbours' lands and using it to improve her own crop by transmitting the others good qualities to it. A Manx witch also swept the dust from the street to her son's door to gain the wealth of the town. On New Year's day it was customary to sweep the floor in the house towards the

hearth so wealth and good luck would stay in the house the rest of the year (Craine, D. 2002, 10), something also common in Cornwall (Courtney, M. A. 1890, 15). Something very similar is still believed in some parts of Galicia. There, it is still customary to avoid sweeping the dust out the main door, so prosperity would remain in the house or even in the souls of the relatives who have come into the house. This same practise was recorded in the northern counties of England (Henderson, W. 1879, 117) and also in Ireland.

The meaning of this practice is related to the Christian belief of "dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return". Thus, the dust gathered would be the remains of those who inhabited the earth before and, consequently, would keep their energy. That could mean that the dust under the overlooker feet offers a connection with him and, as consequence, damaging or using this dust is as effective as damaging the person or asking him to withdraw the evil eye.

11.3 Fire

In this thesis, especially when I talked about special times of the year (chapter 6), we find the use of fire as very common device, so the reason of its use deserves further explanation. As well as water, the role of fire is also to purify although sometimes the process means destruction by burning. Any animal which had died as a consequence of the evil eye could not be used in any way, so burning it to ashes was a practical remedy. In addition, fire is a representative of the sun. In fact, the use of fire in festivals has the objective of ensuring the shinning of the sun. Sometimes this practice brought bad consequences: in Lewis, by the end of the sixteenth century,

this ritual caused a fire in the crops (Macinlay, J. M. 1993, 287). This tradition was also performed in the Galician rías of Arousa and Muros-Noia (González Pérez, C. 1984, 4). When carrying fires it was also customary to carry them sun wise round people and properties to guard them from evil influences (Thompson, C. J. S. 1995, 60).

It is interesting noting how once it was believed in England that fire has such a power that can draw a person to it rendering it helpless to resist (Radford, E. & Radford, M. A. 1949, 116). In fact, when somebody sits looking to the fire lost in day-dreaming, it is thought that someone is casting the evil eye over him. To avoid this, someone should take the tongs and, in silence, turn the centre piece of coal (Thompson, C. J. S. 1995, 131). The use of fire dealing with the evil eye has many different forms and applications, from the use of live coals to the burning of living animals.

One of the uses of fire within fascination is its mere presence, as it happened in the fire festivals mentioned above. A British superstition consisted in lighting a candle at a marriage to avoid the evil eye (Radford, E. & Radford, M. A. 1949, 57), which is also something that we can identify with solar symbolism: a sun illuminating the newly wedded couple to take care of them. After baptism, some Scottish children used to be passed across a fire to keep the evil eye away (Mackay, R. C. 1997). In this case, we could be seeing a representation of a previous ritual of sacrifice to the sun god. Manx fishermen used fire to expel witches from their boats when the herring fishing were unsuccessful. The process was recorded by scholar Charles Roeder (Roeder, C. 1904) by the beginning of the twentieth century, it is worth quoting to show the theatricality of the ritual:

> In the evening when the nets were in the water, if it was calm, they got a lot of oakum and tied it on the end of a stick, then soaking it well with tar in the tar bucket, when the darkness set in, they lighted the oakum and the tar, and the skipper took the torch and commenced at the stem-head, and the rest of the crew looking out for the witch. They were telling many lies over it, sometimes one would say he had seen the witch in this crevice, and another would say that she was in that crevice, and the skipper went with the torch to every place where they said the witch was, and put the burning torch in that place. Then the witch had to get away from the fire, and they kept on going from one place to another for a long time, until someone said the witch was gone aft. Then the skipper went aft with the torch, and put it in every crevice round the stern sheets until the witch was on the rudder head, he said, and then she had to get off that, too, from the torch, and jump into the sea. Then he threw the torch into the sea after her.

Burning is the most common method of using fire to counteract the evil eye. Sometimes just a piece of clothing of the overlooker is burnt, damaging him in a symbolic way and thus forcing him to withdraw the evil eye. In other instances, in the case of bewitched animals, they are burnt on the road to avoid the spread of the evil eye among the other animals on the farm or to discover who has overlooked them, as it is exemplified in chapter 12 in the section dealing with cattle. All of them imply destruction, although not with malefic aim, but with one of purification. In an incantation recorded in Uist (Hebrides), fire is given the power to get rid of envy. In this case, three handfuls of water are thrown to the fire while doing a variant of the

"silver water cure" and the performer asks and answers "Will the fire turn envy? Fire will turn envy"[45] (Mackenzie, W. 1895, 38).

We find coals as a general protective device. To get its protection, it is enough to turn a live coal in the fire and say "the Lord be with us" (Radford, M. A. 1949, 116). In Hogmanay (Scotland) it was customary for the "first footer", the first person who enters a house in New Year's Day, to bring a coal for his host, which is said to keep the evil eye away (Grierson, I. 2000, 144). We can interpret this as a way of sharing the warmth of his own house with his neighbour, and, thus, showing that his intentions are good. In Northumberland it was also traditional bringing coal, but by the mid of the nineteenth century, the first footer started to bring whisky instead (Henderson, W. 1879, 73) after the original symbolism of the coal was lost. In the Midlands, the first footer also brought coal, but moreover he should bring salt, bread and a coin (Wright, A. R. 1900, 60), all of them elements which appear in charms and amulets against the evil eye. Also, in some parts of Scotland it is customary to drive cows over a live coal after calving to prevent the action of witches (http://www.electricscotland.com). But the use of coals also appears in remedies against fascination. In the northern counties of England, in case a woman was affected by the evil eye, her shift is raised over her head and she is turned three times from right to left. Then, someone drops a burning coal through the chemise three times and, finally she puts it on again (Thompson, C. J. S. 1995, 74). Live coals were also used as a general protection. In the Highlands, it was traditional to put embers of smouldering fire in a pot and carried it around the house at bed-time following the path of the sun and thus warding off evil (Henderson, G. 2007, 212).

[45] An till teine farmad? Tillidh teine farmad.

This follows the same mechanism of carrying fire torch around property but without the danger of setting the house on fire.

11.4 Mirrors

The employment of mirrors to combat the action of fascination is a way of counteracting its action by the use of an equivalent. In this case, the evil eye would reflect on the mirror giving the same glance back to the overlooker. In addition, mirrors also shine, so the evil eye would be distracted by their brightness or even confused. We can also consider that mirrors are a way of using the power of fascination which comes from the sun. The sun, the big eye in the sky, shining in the mirror would combat the malefic glance with another malefic glance (see chapter 15 for more information about the sun as the primary source of the evil eye). Its use was recorded in seventeenth century England, when it was frequent observing small mirrors in the hats or doublets of both men and women to avert the influence of the evil eye (Thompson, C. J. S. 1995, 128). If we considered that the intention of mirrors was reflecting the sun, it is not strange finding them in other parts of the world. This gives further strength to sun theory.

11.5 Salt

The use of salt is frequently found for fighting the action of the evil eye, either dissolved in water or on its own. As it happens with saliva, salt is also one of

the most common elements when we study evil eye cases in other parts of the world. It is believed that salt protects against evil spirits in general (Paine, S. 2004, 136) and, more specifically, that witches and bewitched animals are unable to eat anything salted (Guiley, R. E. 1989, 300). In some parts of the world (such as Galicia), salt is placed behind the main door to avoid the entrance of those people who secretly keep evil wishes towards the dwellers. The attribution of this property has to do with its durability and thus, eternity. This led to the belief in the Middle Ages that salt was detested by the Devil (Jones, E. 2009, 113). On the other hand, salt is also a symbol of friendship due to the same: durability (Lawrence, R. M. 1898, 141). Thus, as an extension, it is also used to bring good luck, specially combined with bread or corn, both symbols of fertility, as it could be observed in Ireland. There women used to sprinkle salt and wheat on public functionaries when they assumed office (Jones, E. 2009. 130). This can be interpreted as a way of, not only wishing them good look, but also to avoid the evil eye falling on them. Salt was thrown into the fire in some districts of England before starting to work. Also Scottish fishermen used to salt their nets also to bring good luck and even through some into the sea against the action of fairies before going to fish (Lawrence, R. M. 1898, 184) because fairies are believed to hate the taste of salt (Hunts, R. 1908, 109). Nevertheless, this practice seems to be a bit of nonsense for sea water is already salty, so fairies should be already out of it. The Manx also employed salt against fairies. For instance, once a woman forgot to sprinkle with salt a piece of calf she had sent through her son to a friend. As a consequence, fairies followed the child and licked him till he was sore. As a cure, her mother had to bathe him in the salt water to cast the fairies away (Roeder, C. R. 1889, 325). Salt is also put into the churn in some parts of England and the Isle of Man to avoid the evil eye of a witch just before starting to make butter, more

specifically, a little salt is thrown to the churn and a little to the fire (Train, J. 1845, 184). Charles Dickens in *Master Humphrey's Clock* (1840), chapter 3 includes salt in the elements to make a witch trap:

> These engines were of simple construction, usually consisting of two straws disposed in the form of a cross, or a piece of a Bible cover with a pinch of salt upon it.

Within the evil eye tradition, it is common to find the use of salt combined with other methods. For example in Scotland it is mixed with ashes on a spoon over which some charm is pronounced before spitting on it and applying it to the person affected (Rackwitz, M, 2007, 518). It is used on its own when sprinkled over the cattle to prevent the evil eye falling on them (Maclagan, R.C. 1902, 136); on the clothes, in the case of a person (Rolleston, J. D. 1943, 293); or on an object the overlooker has fixed his glance[46]. This, obviously, is related to the belief mentioned before of the supposed allergy witches have towards salt. So, we could consider that this practice of preventing and even curing the evil eye by sprinkling salt derives from an attempt to know if the action of a witch is involved. Again, as in many other cases, the difference between fascination and witchcraft cannot be clearly discriminated.

In Scotland we find two instances where salt is used in a similar way as a preventive in weddings. In one, salt is spread on the new couple's floor the night before the wedding (Jones, E. 2009, 137). The other is more ritualistic but also involves spreading salt on the floor, but in this case, one of the bridesmaids and the bride are the ones performing the ceremony. The bridesmaid goes the day before to the bride's house to supervise her moving to her new home. She carries a pot full of

[46] In Folk Life Survey, reference C.F.A. –A/28 1950, unpublished, available at the Manx Museum.

salt, which must be the first thing the bride carries into the couple's new house and sprinkles a little on the floor. Then, they come back to the previous house where the rest of the bride's bridesmaids wash her feet (Bennet, M. 1992, 86). These Scottish chamber pots, the same as their equivalents found in Cheshire (England), usually also had a large eye painted at the bottom (Monger, G. P. 1975, 52). Giving a pot filled with salt as a wedding gift has also another purpose: salt was believed to be aphrodisiac as an old saying tells: "fond o'saut, fond o'the lasses" (Rorie, D, 1934, 162).

Although it is regarded as a good luck bringer and, as a consequence, a way of keeping away evil intentions up to the point that Manx beggars refused alms if they are given without it (Lawrence, R.M. 1898, 184), this is not always so. In some parts of England giving away salt could be very dangerous for if it comes into the possession of an evil wisher, he would have power over the donor (Lawrence, R.M. 1898, 183-184). The same happens in case salt is spilled as the following lines dated back to 1708 explain:

> Wee'l tell you the reason
> Why the spilling of Salt
> Is seemed such a fault
> Because it doth ev'ry thing season.
> Th'antiques did opine
> 'Twas of friendship a sign,
> So served it to guest in decorum,
> And thought love decay'd
> When the negligent maid
> Let the salt-cellar tumble before them (Thompson, C. J. S. 1995, 125).

But I stated before, salt is used as part of more complex charms, such as one performed in Scotland. Here a sixpence was borrowed from a neighbour and a good fire was made in the affected person's house placing him in front of it. The one performing the cure took a big spoon and filled it with water. Then, she (it was a woman in the case recorded) took the coin, raised as much salt as possible and placed it all in the water. After mixing it, the water was used to wash three times the affected feet and hands and, finally, he tasted the same water three times. The white witch passed her wet finger across the overlooked brow and threw the rest of the water to the back of the hearth saying "guid preserve frae a'skaith" (Bennett M. 1992, 16).

11.6 Stones

In the chapter dealing with animals, we took a look at snakestones and also at the known as cat's eye. However, these are not the only stones used to prevent the evil eye or even to cure it. The main reason for attributing protective effects to a stone is its shape and colour. But stones have another power simple and efficient: they hurt when thrown at someone. Therefore, stones can be considered as a symbolic way of hurting the evil eye beholder. The Manx people used to put white pebbles in coffins so that the spirits could throw them to the Devil (Gill, W. W. 2002, 5). Nevertheless it was not recommended to take these pebbles on board when going fishing. But fishermen in the British Isles did use stones as amulets. For example, fishermen from Devon used to carry brown and white ringed agate (fig. 30) to preserve them from the evil eye (http://www.sciencemuseum.org), thus they carry a

stone which pattern resembles an eye. Agate is also employed to avert the malicious effects of envy in Uruguay also for the same reason. Another instance is a ring with onyx cut forming an eye (Lovett, E. & Wright, A. W. 1908, 297).

In other cases, the important characteristic in the stone is its colour and/or brightness. Red stones or coral used to be set in gold or silver to wear as jewels and, at the same time, counteract the evil eye. A clear example is the popular Lee penny (see chapter 12). As a consequence, rock crystal was believed to have the same property, either by its own or in spherical shape (Meaney, A. L. 1981, 84). These crystal balls were used in Wales to cure any type of illnesses. They were submerged in water which was afterwards given to those suffering. The following incantation[47] was recited before introducing the stones into the water:

Figure 30 Brown agate. Photograph by Milagros Torrado

O thou stone of Might and Right,
Let me dip thee in the water-
In the water of pure spring or of wave,
In the name of St. David,
In the name of the Twelve Apostles,
In the name of the Holy Trinity,
And of Michael an all the angels,
In the name of Christ and Mary his mother!
Blessings on the clear shinning stone!

[47] The original incantation was in Welsh, but I could only find the English version.

Blessings on the clear pure water!
A healing of all bodily ills
On man and beast alike! (Trevelyan, M. 1973, 231)

It was said that people came from long distances to get this water or to borrow the crystal balls. If they were borrowed, the person carrying them could not speak, sit, or enter anybody's house, nor be found outside his own house after sunset. The Highlanders also used crystal balls as a cure for bewitched cattle or to protect them from the evil eye by sprinkling them with water where they were submerged during May Day (Black, G. F. 1893, 437).

Single beads or pebbles of different colours have also been used from ancient times. For example, the blue and yellow beads used in Burwell (England) (Meaney, A. L. 1981, 28). In Orkney Islands existed the ritual known as "Forespoke Water", which consisted in placing three pebbles from the sea shore in a bowl with water which was given to the overlooked. These stones should be: one black, other white and the other either blue, red, or greenish. To complete the ritual, the following incantation was recited:

In the name of Him that can cure or kill.
This water shall cure all earthly ill,
Shall cure the blood and flesh and bone,
For ilka ane there is a stone
May she fleg all trouble, sickness, pain,
Cure without and cure within
Cure the heart, and horn, and skin. (Mackenzie, W. 1985, 35-36)

When the evil eye has already started its action, stones can also work a cure. In Sutherlandshire, there was a woman who possessed a bag of stones which she had

inherited and which were used as medicine. To cure an overlooked cow, she boiled them in water which was afterwards used as a remedy (Lykiardopoulos, A. 1981, 229). Unluckily, we are not told the shape of these stones.

Amber, although of vegetal origin, it is considered as a semiprecious stone. Its main characteristic as an anti-evil eye device is its glossy aspect as it happens with shining things in general. In Wales it is worn as a potent amulet against fascination at the same time it adorns (Lewis, M. 1923). Scottish children used to be protected by means of amber pendants because it was said to driving witches away (Black, G. F. 1893, 476). By the end of the eighteenth century, it was recorded it use as a cure for the evil eye in Galloway. The procedure was a common one: dipping the amber bead in water three times and giving it to drink to the sufferer (Balck, G. F. 1893, 477). Also in Scotland, amber was used for curing sore eyes (Henderson, W. 1879, 145).

11.7 Threads and Knots

Threads, strings or even pieces of cloth used to be very popular to prevent and cure the evil eye. There are many examples of their use in children and cattle and that the traditional colour is normally red, although this is not always so. For example, in West Cornwall it was customary to tie a piece of white horse hair to the heart finger of the left hand of children to avoid the evil eye (Taylor, M. P. 1933, 309). In most examples, they also have several knots (usually three, six or nine) which can be interpreted as a way of distracting the evil eye beholder. That is, the overlooker

would fix his glance on the knot and thus would miss its original aim. W. Walter Gill explains this very well:

> These interlaced patterns found on gravestones, crosses[48], swords, and elsewhere, have another humble descendant in the convolutions scrawled in whiting by the Manx housewife about her threshold; the root idea being to intrigue the evil eye of the witch or other ill-wishing adversary and keep it out of mischief (Gill, W. W. 1932, 299).

This mechanism is also present in the Manx practice of scribbling intervolving patterns about the doorstep after having cleaned it, because it was believed that "the witch might be hypnotized by trying to trace them with her evil eyes" (Gill, W. W. 1932, 158).

Figure 31 The Dragon Cross, at the Manx Museum, showing the plait-work which distracts the evil eye. Photograph by Milagros Torrado Cespón

The use of threads was very common in the Highlands. It was known as "Eolais na T-Snaithnean" or the "Wisdom of the Threads". The person who made the thread could also determine if the case was one of evil eye or not by using the thread. All he had to do was weave it before the ill person, if he yawned, he had been overlooked (Mackay, R. C. 1997). Although threads were very popular in Scotland, its use reached other parts of the British Isles. Usually, anybody could make one of these

[48] (fig. 31)

threads, although those made by a white witch were preferred. Also, the material could be any, but if possible, they should be of the wool taken from black sheep. When given one of them, it must be carried home in a specific way: in the palm of the hand and never between the fingers and the thumb because it is believed that they are not blessed (Mackay, R. C. 1997) showing again the constant religion-tradition. The reason why these fingers are not blessed is because they are believed to be the ones Eve used when plucked the fruit from the forbidden tree (Davidson, T. 1960, 145). In general, we do not find distinction between those threads used for people and for animals. In some parts of Scotland seems to exist such a distinction and Mackay (Mackay, R. C. 1997) explains that those used in humans consisted in a three-ply thread made of red wool which is knotted. Unfortunately, the number of knots is not stated by Mackay, but, probably they were three or nine (Conway, D. J. 2000, 21), which are numbers with ritual meaning. Nevertheless, they could not be a lot, because after each knot the following was recited:

> An evil eye covered thee,
> A mouth bespoke thee.
> A heart envied thee
> If harm has come,
> With evil eye,
> With evil wish,
> With evil passion.
> Mayst thou cast it off,
> Every malignancy.
> Every malice,
> Every harassment.
> And mayst thou be well forever,
> Whilst this thread goes around thee,
> In honour of all
> May the spirit of balm be everlasting (Mackay, R. C. 1997).

Within the Scottish tradition, we find another description of the making of these protective threads. In Inverness-shire (Scotland) it was made using six equal strands of wool. Here, we are told that the colour, although predominantly red, can be also the colour of the animal involved in the ritual. It cannot be broken and a knot is placed at each end and one in the middle. These knots must be done in silence, without letting the thread touch the ground neither using the thumb and the forefinger. Moreover, while preparing the wool for doing this, the performer should mutter "Jesus went on horseback; and He sprained His foot. He said: 'Bone to bone. Flesh to flesh. Sinew to sinew. Blood to blood'. And His flesh was made whole" (Davidson, T. 1960, 145). In other districts, the responsibility of the evil eye plays a role in the cure. The thread is passed three times over a horn spoon. The ends of the thread are placed together and the spoon is then passed other three times round the culprit. Thus the sufferer's disease is correctly named or diagnosed whenever the thread stays on (Henderson, G. 2007, 339).

In another Scottish instance, threads used for overlooked animals were three ply and three colours. These colours are believed to have this meaning: red, symbol of the Crucifixion; black standing for the condemnation of God; and white, which means the purification of the spirit (Ross, A. 2000, 87).

Although the thread was usually tied on people or animals, we can also find tying rowan bunches or crosses, but, in this case, no knot could be done on the thread, otherwise the charm would fail (Black, G. F. 1893, 478). There is a Scottish saying that runs as follows:

> The Rawn tree in the widd-bin
> Haud the witches on cum in.
> Or Rawn tree in red thread

> Pits the witches t'their speed.
> Rawn tree in red thread
> Gars the witches tyne their speed (Mitchell, A.L. 2000, 132).

In an example recorded in 1937, a woman from Renfrewshire (Scotland) recited something similar when explaining to her interviewer that it was customary to draw patterns on the floor every morning. She traced a border of tangled thread with a limestone and recite:

> Tangled thread and rowan seed
> Gars the witches lose their speed (Banks, M.M. 1937, 268-269).

We can find red thread in literature too. In this case, it is given by a witch and used combined with rowan and ash tree to cast away ghosts. It appears in the second volume of *In Far Lochaber* (1898), chapter 1, by the Scottish William Black:

> "She lifs in a cellar underneath one of the houses. Oh, she iss a fearful woman, that! But if you tek her money, she will gif you something that iss ferry good at night fro keeping aweh the ghosts and such things; oh yes, I hef seen it; it iss a bit of an ash-tree and a bit of a rowan-treem and it iss tied together by a piece of red thread, and there iss red wax on it. You put it on the mantelpiece, and the ghosts are afrait of it; they cannot come into the room either by the window or the door."

12. The Most Liable to Be Affected

Anything or anybody can be affected by the power of a malefic glance, but there are some elements that are especially protected, namely, cattle, crops and children. The first two, provide human being with food and the third means the continuity of the species. When people were affected by the evil eye in the British Isles, they "grew sick, had no great pain but began to feel tired and drowsy. They grew thinner and thinner every day until at last they become mere bones" (Thompson, C. J. S. 1995, 73). As a result, numerous charms, protective devices and remedies are used to counteract the effect of evil eyes. The charms and amulets used with these are interchangeable, but some of them are exclusive. For example, tying red rags or threads can be found in any of the three, while the use of silver brooch was exclusive to children.

12.1 Cattle and Other Farm Animals

In all cultures where the evil eye belief is present, cattle occupy a special place. Taking into account that cows meant the main way of sustenance for the peasantry, it is not surprising that the greatest fear of a country family was the loss of its cattle or the damage of their derivatives, such as butter and milk. When a head of cattle fell ill and died in strange circumstances, the most plausible explanation was that it had been the target of an evil eye, usually from an envious neighbour. Thus, having a cow praised was considered a signal of the possible action of the evil eye if

a blessing was not pronounced. In some parts of the British Isles another method to counteract the effects of an envious praise was saying a higher praise. For example, if someone said "That is a good animal", the owner must answer something like "It is more than that!" (Campbell, J. G. 1902, 62). Saying the owner a higher praise would be a way of given true value to it. That is: if the first is considered a way of disguising an evil intention, the second, being from the owner, would be considered as a real and therefore the intention of the first would be annulated. As a result, folk has created several methods to protect them from the effects of fascination along the centuries. King James was aware of the amulets on cattle when he explained that "such charmes, as commonlic dafto wives uses for healing forspoken goodes, for preserving them from evill eyes, by knitting rountrees or sundriest kind of herbes to the haire and tailes of the goodes" (Dalyell, J.G. 1836, 5).

In literature we can find some examples of the fear of fascination over animals. Mr Rochester accused Jane Eyre of bewitching his horse when they first met in Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* (1847), chapter 13:

> "When you came on me in Hay Lane last night, I thought unaccountably of fairy tales, and had half a mind to demand whether you had bewitched my horse: I am not sure yet."

Jeffrey Farnol exemplifies this action in a more explicit way in *The Broad Highway* (1910), chapter 17:

> They think me possessed of the 'Evil Eye' or some such folly --may I cut you a piece of bread?"
> "Oh, Peter!"
> "Already, by divers honest-hearted rustics, I am credited with having cast a deadly spell upon certain unfortunate pigs, with having fought hand to hand with the hosts of the nethermost

> pit, and with having sold my soul to the devil--may I trouble you to pass the butter?"

As the above text exemplifies, strangers are always suspected of having cast the evil eye over the cattle in case something happens to them in the next days. In the Scottish Highlands, if a foreigner looks with admiration to a cow, the inhabitants used to give him a little of her milk in order to avoid the evil eye (Park, R.. 1912, 11). We could interpret this as follows: if the supposed overlooker has the intention of bewitching the cow, the milk he has received would also be affected and he would not cast the evil eye over the milk he is about to drink. Also, the owner is sharing part of his belongings, so that the overlooker would not covet what he already has.

When two people are trying to buy the same cow, it is thought that the one who is left without her he will probably look at her with envy and thus cast the evil eye over the animal. If this happens, the cow will not be able to give good milk or she could even die. When the cow actually dies, it is customary that the owner of the cow has to burn her and place the carcass in the road, if possible in a crossway to know if the cow has been killed by an evil eye. The first person who approaches is the one to be blamed (Leech, F. 1861). This was known as “oural losht” in the Isle of Man, where those involved in the ritual believed that the purifying action of fire would drive away or destroy the malignant spirit present in the animal and so prevent spreading it among the other animals (Craine, D. 2002, 19). There is a similar method in the west of England where the farmer has to take one of his bullocks and bleed it to death, placing all the blood on bundles of straw which are burnt. Then, amidst the resultant smoke, the guilty will appear either in reality or as a representation (Hunt, R. 1908, 320). In a Scottish variant, the meat of the cow must be boiled, otherwise the “dosgaich” or loss will spread to the rest of the animals.

While doing this, if an animal cries for a piece of meat, it must be said "whist with you, for asking of blighted food; may your own skin be the first on the rafters". If this is not said, the evil eye will come back (Mackay, R. C. 1997). Also in Scotland, a dead beast was buried feet uppermost under the entrance of the stable to prevent the coming of the evil eye, although this would not cure the already affected animals (Marston, W. & Saunders, J. 1858, 29). In Banffshire (Scotland), when the cattle had been cursed by an evil eye, a pig was burnt alive in order to get rid of the malefic influence. After this, the ashes were spread over the byre and the other farm buildings (Radford, E. & Radford, M. A. 1949, 116). If it was a pig the one affected by the evil eye, a solution in Somerset was burning the hairs from the pig's back at midnight and, after hearing a great bang on the house door, the pig will recover (Baker, M. 1975, 48). In Ireland, if your cattle were affected by the evil eye, the solution was to drive it to a holy well and make them drink its water while praying. Nevertheless, if the animals look at a graveyard in their way to the sacred well, the cure will not succeed (Wilde, F. 1890).

In Cornwall it is believed that if you want to know who has cast the evil eye on your cattle (or a person), it is necessary to put the urine of the diseased animal in a bottle, cork it and bury mouth downwards. The supposed witch who has done the harm would be afflicted with strangury and would confess her malefic act (Hunt, R. 1908, 411). In the Isle of Arran they run the following method: all the females go out of the house and one with no relation to them enters it. She puts on the fire a pot with milk covered with a green turf. It is left until it burns. The one who cast the evil eye on the affected cow will suffer with the burning and the only relief is getting to the house where this is being carried on (Rackwitz, M. 2007, 517).

The use of animals' hearts (fig. 32) in evil eye charms is extended all through the British Isles. In Newcastle (England), if a horse if killed due to the effects of the evil eye, its heart was a method to reveal the culprit. The owner has to take out the horse's heart and stick it with pins. Then, after closing every entrance of air in a room, it is roasted in the fire between 11 and 12 midnight. At midnight, the door is open and the figure of the person who has cast the evil eye upon the horse would appear (Henderson, W. 1879, 221). In Somerset (England), a woman who suspected her pig of being overlooked was told to take a sheep's heart, stick pins into it and roast it before a fire. While doing this, the people reunited with her had to pronounce:

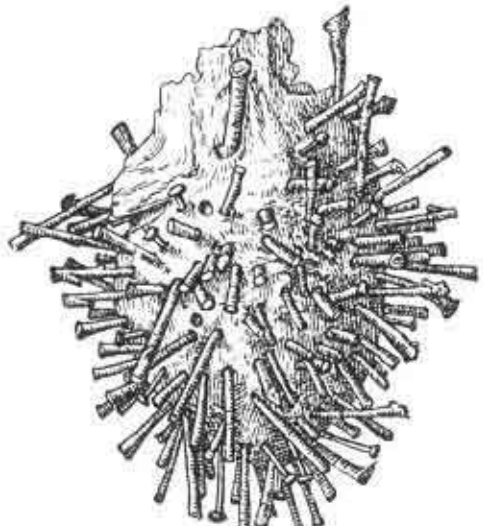

Figure 32 Drawing of a animal's heart with pins (Elworthy, T. 1895)

> It is not this heart I mean to burn,
> But the person's heart I wish to turn,
> Wishing them neither rest not peace
> Till they are dead and gone.

Sometimes the son of the woman bewitched was asked to "put a little more salt on the fire", sprinkling the fire with salt. When whole the process was finished a black cat jumped and was believed to be the overlooker who had been exorcised through the rite (Elworthy, T. F. 1895). As I explained before, a black cat was traditional considered as a good omen, so this charm could be considered either a new one or the result of adaptation. A calf's heart with pins is also used as a protective device against the evil eye all through England. It is usually placed in chimneys in order to protect the whole house (Thompson, C. J. S. 1995, 287-288). In

Cornwall, it is believed that if you stick pins into a bullock's heart, the overlooker will feel a stab for each one and will take off the curse (Courtney, M.A. 1890, 147). In the isle of Guernsey this process was known as "la bouïture". The ritual here recorded involved more preparation than its other counterparts. First, some adulterated Latin words must be said while sticking the pins into the heart, two at each time:

- First two pins: Adibaga, Sabaoth, Adenay, contra, natout prisons preront fini unicio paracle gasum.
- Two pins more: qui susum mediotos agres gravoil valax.
- Two pins more: Laula zazai valoi sator saluxi parade gassum
- Two pins more: Mortuis cum fice suni et per flagelationem domini nostril Jesu Christi.
- The two last pins: Avir sunt devant nous paracle tui strator verbonum ossisum fidando.

After all the nails had been stuck, the person performing the remedy also said: the following charm:

> "I call on him or her who has caused the Missal Abel to be fabricated: cease from thine evil deed; come, nevertheless, by sea or by hand, wherever thou art; show thyself to us without delay and without fail".

In this case the heart is not burnt, but hung from the chimney and, during nine days, the whole operation is repeated sticking the pin in a different part each time. After this time, the heart was burnt and the evil doer appeared (MacCulloch, E. 1903, 392-393). Both the meaning of the Latin words as that of some English words was

probably unknown to the reciter, as it is the case of other charms (see ABRACADABRA in this chapter).

In the north of England and Scotland there existed three elements held in great estimation to counteract, among other maladies, the effects of an evil eye in cattle. These were the Black Penny, the Lockerby Penny and the Lee Penny. Any of them was dipped in water which was then given to the ill animal to drink (Baker, M. 1974, 39). The Black Penny was a coin or medal which belonged to the Turnbull family in Northumberland. Knowing its powers, the Black Penny was frequently borrowed by many farmers. They lost it in 1827 when it was borrowed to man who affirmed having sending it back by post (Radford, E. and M.A. 1995, 55). The Lockerby Penny was also a similar thing. It was a flat piece of silver which was also lent to those who may need it and which was also used with water. In this case, the remaining water was kept in bottles to be used in case the evil eye fall again on the cattle (Radford, E. and M.A. 1995, 223). The Lee Penny (fig. 33) is a red triangular stone set in a silver coin of Edward IV which belongs to a Scottish family named Lockhart of Lee and who got it in the early fourteenth century from the Holy Land (Radford, E. and M.A. 1995, 216-217; Baker, M. 1974, 39). In this case, the Lee Penny was dipped three times in the water (Simpson, J.Y. 1872, 215). Its power against cattle illnesses was such that during the epidemic of plague which attacked Newcastle in 1645 it was borrowed under a deposit of £6000. After proving its virtues, the inhabitants of Newcastle offered the

Figure 33 The Lee Penny. Photograph used with permission of the author, Copyright 2011 Bill Lockhart, All Rights Reserved.

owner the money so they could keep the Lee penny (Simpson, J. Y. 1863, 243). But the amulet was kept in the family. In fact, they still own it. This amulet was popularized thanks to Sir Walter Scott's novel *The Talisman*, which uses the Lee Penny as the inspiration for this fictional amulet. In the introduction of this book, he states about the Lee Penny:

> The most remarkable part of its history, perhaps, was that it so especially escaped condemnation when the Church of Scotland chose to impeach many other cures which savoured of the miraculous, as occasioned by sorcery, and censured the appeal to them, "excepting only that to the amulet, called the Lee penny, to which it had pleased God to annex certain healing virtues which the Church did not presume to condemn" (Scott, W. 1868, 4)

The Lee penny has special significance due to its form and components. First, it is made of silver, which implies that it is already good against fairies. Secondly, it has a red stone, and red, as I have explained, is the colour of blood and, therefore of life (see chapter 8). But if it was not enough, this red stone on the silver coin has a triangular shape. Triangles are related to number three, which is a very common number in charms (see chapter 10). All this makes the Lee penny a very valuable amulet.

We find several methods through which cattle can be protected from an evil eye. In the case a cow or a horse is for sale in the Isle of Man but the purchaser declines the prize set upon it, the owner will lift from the ground a portion of the earth or dust on which that person was standing with his right foot. The owner rubs the animal all over with this dust to prevent the possible effects of his evil eye on not fulfilling the purchase (Cunning, J.G. 1861, 21). Dust is also employed by the Manx

if the cow has already been overlooked: sweeping the road outside the gate and throwing all the dust over the cow invoking the Trinity (Radford, E. & Radford, M.A. 1995, 156). In Wales there is also a way of preventing the evil eye by rubbing. In this case, the owner rubs a piece of paper known as "papur y Dewin" (the wizard's paper), which has been given to the owner by a wizard. While he is rubbing the paper all over the back right from the ears to the tail, he says "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost". In one of this "papur y Dewin" it was written:

> In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. And the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, my redeemer, that I will give relief to (the owner of the animals' name) creatures, his cows, and his calves, and his horses, and his sheep, and his pigs, and all the creatures that alive be in his possession, from all witchcraft and from all other assaults of Satan. Amen.

Then, at the bottom of the paper, on the left, it appears the word ABRACADABRA disposed as follows:

ABRACADABRA
ABRACADABR
ABRACADAB
ABRACADA
ABRACAD
ABRACA
ABRAC
ABRA
ABR
AB
A

Also, in the centre, a number of planetary symbols appeared, and on the right, a circular figure filled with lines and symbols (Davies, J. C. 1911, 286). The word ABRACADABRA, although is nowadays considered as an invention of modern

magicians by many, comes from the Hebrew expression "abreg ad hábra" meaning "send your ray up to death" and has been widely used from the Middle Ages (Chevalier, J. and Gheerbrant, A. 1986, 43-44).

There is also another written charm which is used against the effects of the evil eye upon animal or person, as well as a cure for the bite of a mad dog:

SATOR
AREPO
TENET
OPERA
ROTAS (Thompson, J.C.S, 1995, 143)

The origin and meaning of this acrostic is not clear yet, although in the 1920's Felix Grosser came to the conclusion that these letters formed a cross with the word "Pater Noster" plus the Latin equivalents to alpha and omega (that is, "a" , "beginning"; and "o", "end") (Bilardi, C. R. 2009, 282):

```
          P
A         A         O
          T
          E
          R
P A T E R N O S T E R
          O
          S
          T
          E
O         R         A
```

We also find clear Christian references in another way of protecting cattle in England collected by Reginald Scott in his *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584) (in Radford, E. & Radford, M. A. 1995, 90). In this case, a candle was made from the wax taken from the Paschal Candle at Easter. Early on a Sunday morning, hot wax from it was dropped between the ears and the horns of the animal while invoking the

Trinity. The remaining wax was placed crosswise on the threshold or over the main door, so that all animals had to pass over or under it to get into or out of the shed. If this was accomplished, cattle would be protected for the rest of the year. Also, in Scotland, there is a blessing for the herd in which Saint Brigit, Virgin Mary and Saint Columba are asked to protect the cattle:

> From rocks, from drifts, from streams,
> From crooked passes, from destructive pits,
> From the straight arrows of the slender ban-shee,
> From the heart of envy from the eye of evil. (Carmichael, A. 2007, 181)[49]

There are many other devices to prevent cattle from being overlooked, such as setting sprigs of juniper about the byre (Radford, E. & Radford, M.A. 1995, 208) or hanging bells around their necks (Guiley, R. E. 1989, 37). However, the most common and widespread is the horseshoe, as it prevents the entrance of both the evil eye and fairies. The horseshoe, although it has various interpretations, seems to be also a representation of the crescent, being thus a moon symbol. The moon is sometimes believed to the an agent which can produce the evil eye's effects; as a result, by using its symbolism, we get its protection, in the same way eye-like forms are commonly used as apotropaic. The power of the evil eye was believed to be more potent during the first Monday of the quarter. Therefore, in Scotland, cattle were kept all day long indoors to prevent it (Carmichael, A. 2007, 614). There are also exists the following rhyme:

> The first Monday of the quarter,
> Take care that luck leave not thy dwelling.

[49] Bho chreag, bho chathan, bho allt, / bho chadha cam, bho mhille sluice, / bho shaighde reang nam ban seanga sith, / bho chridhe mhi-ruin, bho shuil an uile, / bho shaighde reang nam ban seanga sith, / bho chridhe mhi-ruin, bho shuil an uilc.

> The first Monday of the Spring quarter,
> Leave not thy cattle neglected. (Ross, A.2000, 84)

In the Highlands it was customary blessing the cattle on the third of May by taking the urine and dung of the cattle, mixing it with the owner's urine and sprinkling the livestock with it (Rackwitz, M. 2007, 518). It is also worth mentioning a protective method performed in the Isle of Man where both the horse and the plough were sprinkled with "chamberlye" (stale urine) where some hen's dung was mixed when both were taken out to start working. This assured that they were free from the action of the evil eye (Moore, A.W. *et al* 1924; Roeder, C. 1904). The fact of blessing cattle in May, is representative of the bad connotations of this month, as it has been explained in chapter 6.

Other special feature of the horseshoe is the material it is made from: iron. This gives it another magic quality: fairies are allergic to iron. Horseshoes can also be considered as representations of the female genitals, which, as it has already been explained in another chapter, are used to avert the influence of evil eyes.

Ribbons tied in the cows' tails were also very common among peasantry, especially in Scotland, although they are also found in other parts of the British Isles. The colour of these threads varied, and they could be used both to cure as well as to protect. The so-called "Charm of the Threads" consisted in making three strings of three colours into a cord. The colours were: black, symbolic of the condemnation of God; red, symbolizing the crucifixion; and white, in representation of the purification of the spirit. Once done, the cord was twisted three times round the tail of the animal and tied in a complex knot (Ross, A. 2000, 87). In Sussex, it was frequent to see young cattle with a tarred string or an old bootlace threaded through a hole pierced in their dewlaps and thus prevent the evil eye (Baker, M. 1975, 37). In Lincolnshire,

instead of threads, a strip of sheep or goat's skin is hung from the collar of a horse as protection (Rudkin, E. H. 1933, 109). Maclagan (Maclagan, R.C. 1902, 144-145) describes a charm used to counteract the evil eye in the Highlands: the woman with the knowledge to carry on the charm asked for yarn dyed with alum, so it was red. She wound the thread around her thumb, middle finger and ring finger of her left hand, holding it between the thumb and the mid-finger of the right hand, never letting the forefinger touch the thread. She made a knot in the thread and put it in her lips muttering an incantation. This process was repeated three times. After this, she rubbed the cow beginning in one of her horns with a circular motion until she reached the other horn. Then, she tied the each knot on the cow's tail, leaving them covered. With each sign of improvement of the cow, a knot was taken off and burnt.

As we can see, number three is especially used in charms as it is a symbolic number that we will see later on in detail. Another worth-mentioning curious Irish remedy also includes number three. It runs as follows:

> Three locks of hair were pulled from the cow's forehead, three from her back, three from her tail, and one from under her nostrils. The directions continued as follows: The operators were to write the names of eight persons in the neighbourhood whom they might suspect of having done the harm (each name three times), and the one of these eight who was considered to be the most likely to have "blinked" the cow was to be pointed out. When this had been done there was to be a bundle of thatch pulled from the roof of the suspected person. The owner of the cow was then to cut a sod, and take a coal out of the fire on a shovel on which to burn the hair, the thatch, and the paper on which the names had been written. The sod was then to be put to the cow's mouth, and if she licked it she would live. (Seymour, J. D. 1913, 138).

Another protective device, in this case found in East Anglia, was the drawing of two eyes or eye-like figures decorating the carts to prevent the action of an evil eye (Baker, M. 1975, 43). Drawings of eyes against the evil eye appear also in many countries, such as India, China, Greece, Portugal or Malta. In this case, instead of in carts, they are in boats. In Egypt, the eye of Horus, known as a powerful anti evil eye device, was drawn in funeral boats. Either in boats or in carts, these drawings had the mission to protect what was considered as an essential tool for living: a cart for a farmer or a boat for a fisher. As a consequence, anything in the boat or cart was also protected, in the case of carts, especially cattle and horses, which meant the workforce.

Dairy products are also much feared of being affected by an evil eye. Sometimes, offering some milk to the stranger who is looking at the cow can be enough to avoid his evil eye but usually other measures must be taken. The use of certain plants worked as a sure protection. In the Highlands and in other parts of the British Isles it was believed that if the handle of the churn (fig. 34) or the churn itself was made of rowan wood, the making of butter would be protected (Ross, A. 2000, 77; Radford, E. & Radford, M. A. 1995, 78). In the Isle of Man, it was considered very efficacious to place a branch of mountain ash in the cow house on May Eve to prevent the milk from being bewitched (Moore, A.W. 1891, 100). Another solution was nailing a colt or a donkey

Figure 34 Churn. Photograph by Milagros Torrado Cespón

shoe to the bottom of the churn (Maclagan, R.C. 1902, 121). In Scotland, in the northwest, when one enters to a house where the butter is being made, he has to lay his hand upon the churn and thus show no intention of casting the evil eye (Lawrence, R. M. 1898, 26). In the Western Highlands there was a charm to keep evil eye away for both milk and churn which has been transmitted from parent to child which includes very interesting elements:

> When you make a beginning
> Put a good handful of salt in it.
> Put root and flower of the daisy in it.
> Put the entrails of a seal and a hare in it.
> Cut a wand of rowan over from the face of Ellasaid.
> A red thread with a tight knot
> Put on the head of the churn staff.
> And should the witch Hendry come.
> The boy would conquer her (Maclagan, R.C. 1902, 97)

Each of these lines is full of symbolism. The first two lines make reference to a custom found (among other places) in the Isle of Man which consists of carrying salt in one's pockets when starting a journey and thus keeping off the evil eye (Thompson, C. J. S. 1995, 125). The "daisy" in the third line may have double symbolism. Daisies represent innocence and purity of the Christ Child (Cram, R. A. & Webber, F. R. 2003, 71). Therefore, as Christian symbols are frequent in the evil eye tradition, this possibility is plausible. On the other hand, the word "daisy" is an evolution from Old English "dæȝes éaȝe" (day's eye), so its symbolism as an eye should also be taken into account. The inclusion of a seal seems to be strange, but the hare is a well-known reference to witches, many times blamed for casting the evil eye. Rowan is often used against the evil eye. "Ellasaid" was a Celtic deity equivalent to the Greek Helena (Maclean, L. 1840, 142). The red thread is again a

frequent anti evil eye device, especially used in animals and children. The Witch Hendry of Endor was, as the native who told this charm stated, "the strongest witch that ever lives, but if any person would get all these things and use them, she, or any other witch, could not do him injury" (Maclagan, R.C. 1902, 96)

In the *Malleus Maleficarum*, one of the most famous witch's treatises, we find a description of the method witches used to bewitch and steal milk without even touching the cow: "a witch will sit down in a corner of her house with a pail between her legs, stick a knife or some instrument in the wall or a post, and make as if to milk it with her hands. Then she summons her familiar who always works with her in everything, and tells him that she wishes to milk a certain cow from a certain house, which is healthy and abounding in milk. And suddenly the devil takes the milk from the udder of that cow, and brings it to where the witch is sitting, as if it were flowing from the knife (Kramer, H. & Sprenger, J. 2008, 231). To prevent this from happening, the Manx folk used to place a branch of the "cuirn" or mountain ash in the cow house on May Eve (Moore, A.W. 1891, 100).

There are several methods to accomplish in case the milk be already bewitched. On the Borders, dairymaids press down the churn stuff to the bottom of the churn when they think the butter does not come due to the influence of an evil eye. As a consequence, the culprit will be drawn to the house, enter it and sit down without the power to rise (Henderson, W. 1879, 184). When this was suspected in Leinster, doors were shut and the plough-irons thrust into the fire and connected with the churn by twigs of mountain ash or quickenberry (a rare type rowan tree). The responsibility of the bewitchment will feel tortured by the red-hot coulter and will come to the house. She has to present through the window a bit of butter which the dairymaids throw into the churn and thus the butter will come (Henderson, W. 1879,

184). On other occasions, it was effective to plunge a red-hot poker into the cream to burn the witch or, as it was recorded in Ireland, keep a smouldering turf under the churn. Although, this was done with the intention of counteracting the action of an evil eye, what really happened was that the temperature of the cream was altered, which was many times effective (Radford, E. & Radford, M.A. 1995, 78-79). Something similar was carried on in the Borders where it takes a more ritualistic form. In this case, the farmer's wife had to take a red hot horseshoe and drop it into the milk pail carried by the first dairymaid who crossed the doorway. It was imperative that this were performed at the moment the dairymaid were lowering the pail to get into the house and, what was more important, that nobody knew the intentions of the farmer's wife (Davidson, T. 1992, 146). In other instances, the churn was put into running water and sometimes a prayer was pronounced. This, as those procedures seen before, was made to change the cream's temperature. A Manx farmer told me in 2010 that this method used to be very common and that some people used to charge quite a good quantity of money for casting the evil eye away from the churn in this way not knowing that it was just a case of inappropriate temperature instead of one of bewitchment.

Although strange, in Wales a case was recorded where the witch herself was believed to be at the bottom of the churn and that was why butter did not come. Here, the dairymaid had heard noises in the churn and, when the lid was removed, a hare jumped out and ran towards the door. Everyone assumed that the animal was a witch and that the churn was under her spell (Owen, E. 1896, 229). In Scotland, in cases where the cow has been bewitched by an evil eye she gives blood instead of giving, the easiest way to counteract its effects is by putting a molucca bean or Virgin Mary's nut inside the milk bucket and the cow will recover (Rackwitz, M. 2007, 517)

or, if butter does not come, put into a rag leaves of small bistort and yellow devil's bit (dandelion) and immerse it into the overlooked milk (Rackwitz, M. 2007, 518). Another Scottish method follows a similar procedure to that of "witch bottles". The farmer, on his knees, has to draw milk from the four teats into a bottle and say: "may God bless these cattle-folds! This I am asking in the name of God, nor am I asking but for mine own". Then, the bottle was tightly corked and kept in a hidden place, assuring that the milk will not be bewitched again (Cameron, I. 1928, 78). One Irish method to get rid of the effects of an evil eye when a cow gives little milk is bringing the suspected culprit to milk the cow in a tin can were three bronze articles have been placed and the cow will recover (Wood-Martin, W.G. 1902, 285).

Sometimes, dairymaids wear the amulets themselves in order to protect both dairy and cattle. It is the case in the Scottish Highlands where they used to carry a little cross made of rowan twigs tied with red worsted (Thompson, C. J. S. 1995, 218). Then Manx peasantry also employed rowan crosses to protect their cattle. In this case, crosses had to be made without the use of a knife and were then fastened to the cattle's tails on May Eve (Radford, E. and Radford, M.A. 1995, 289). In the Western Highlands, juniper was used as a protective device. Here, the fetter used to bind the animal's legs during milking was sometimes fastened with a juniper stick to prevent overlooking (Radford, E. & Radford, M.A. 1995, 208).

Earlier in this section I included a blessing pronounced in Scotland in which we find the following line: "from the straight arrows of the slender ban-shee". The connection of the "banshee" with the evil eye phenomenon seems to be unclear, because the ban-shee is a mythological creature who acts as a death omen: when death is near, she would scream to tell its presence. Nevertheless, if we take a look at its etymology, the word "ban-shee" was originally the Irish Gaelic word to name

female fairies. This meaning leads as to the blessing's reference to the "straight arrows" which takes us to another form of incantation which can be easily related to the evil eye tradition. This is known as "elf-shot" and may cause the immediate death of the cow affected. The attack is attributed to fairies, who are sometimes also blamed for stealing cows' milk. Sometimes the line between what is called the evil eye and the elf-shot was not well defined. Even the remedies used to counteract its effects have elements in common with those employed to thwart the evil eye. For example, in Ireland, one of the remedies for elf-shot recorded was giving to the affected cow an herbal drink in which three halfpence were boiled or, in case we want to prevent it, red rags were tied to the cattle's horns (Westropp, T.J. 1922, 395), both elements used in evil eye charms. Another example for curing elf-shot from Wigtownshire (Scotland) used red woollen thread that was put through the hole of a flat whorl of hard sandstone. It was dipped three times in water taken from a well on which the sun did not shine, by a young girl with red or yellow hair. A rhyme, in what was supposed to be Gaelic, was said over the water, which was then given to the cow to drink. Maybe, the most curious aspect of this charm is that a red haired woman plays a role in the cure and she is not, as it usually happens, part of the problem.

Figure 35 Possible elf-arrows. Manx Museum. Photograph by Milagros Torrado Cespón

A difference between both ways of bewitching is that when a cow or a horse is elf-shot, the owner finds the actual arrow (fig. 35) near the animal. These arrows are in fact fossil belemnites or flint slivers (Baker, M. 1975, 37) which are curiously

also used as a protective device against the evil eye as it was done in Scotland, where it was customary to sew them to a piece of garment and thus avert the evil influence (Macinlay, J.M. 1993, 257).

12.2 Children

Among the victims of the evil eye, children occupy a special place. They are the most affected maybe due to their fragility but also because they are more prone to contract infectious illnesses which could be easily attributed to a malefic influence in bygone times. The Spanish scholar Enrique de Villena (1384-1434) said that children were more liable to be affected due to the aperture of their pores and the warmth of their blood[50] (Almagro, F. & Fernández Carpintero, J. 1977, 40). But they are also exposed to the evil eye because they are the main target of barren or childless women who envy the healthy babies of their neighbours. Nevertheless, some people in Ireland think that those born with the power of the evil eye can even damage their own children (Gregory, L. 1992, 86). This opinion is very interesting because it could be interpreted as the envy a parent may feel towards a younger image of himself.

In general, all young beings are more liable to be affected by the evil eye, from children to plants. Nevertheless, as little children are unable to talk, they cannot say clearly what disturbs them, so blaming the evil eye was an easy explanation for the worried mother. In spite of this, there were cases where even problems with obvious causes could be attributed to the evil eye of an envious neighbour. For

[50] E por esto mas en los niños pequeños tal acaerçe daño mirados demandada vista, por abertura de sus poros, y fervor y calidez de su sangre y abondosa, dispuesta a rresçebir la inpresion, fazese.

example, a Guernsey newspaper published a case in 1912 in which a father claimed that his children were infested with lice because a neighbour had bewitched them (Dewar, S. 1970, 11).

Unless they were born in a chime hour (3, 6, 9 and 12 or 4, 8 and 12 depending on the place) or on a Sunday (Radford, E. & Radford, M.A. 1995, 53), newborns were believed to be in danger of being the target of the evil eye until they were baptised, that is why in Western Scotland, babies were kept alone in their rooms until the day of their baptism (Rolleston, J. 1943, 288). They were also at disposition of envious fairies, unless they were born with a caul, a membrane on their head (Thompson, C. J. S. 1995, 18). The caul was kept as an amulet especially against drowning, so it was highly esteemed by sailors. This belief, as I could confirm, is still alive nowadays in the Isle of Man. Baptism was seen as an overall protection for any kind of evil desire. The symbolism of baptism here can be analysed from several points of view. First of all, it is a Christian tradition through which the newborn is released from sin. As a Christian ritual, it is also a protective measure against any kind of devilish influence as the evil eye is considered by many people. Secondly, it is also a Celtic tradition related by Aristotle in his *Politics* in which newborns were bathed in a cold water river in order to be strong and healthy. This has to do with the magic properties attributed to water as a symbol of life (Alonso Romero, F. 2004, 474). Thirdly, from a simpler point of view, water can be seen as a means of cleaning physically, that is, removing the dirt from the baby's body. Taking into account that the evil eye was often confused with some infectious illnesses related to poor hygiene, washing was a good way of counteracting it. In Western Scotland, newborns were bathed in salted water and made to taste of it three times immediately after birth as a protection against the evil eye (Napier, J. 1879)

this further reinforces two important elements more: number three and salt, which will be analyzed in more detail later on. What was clear was that while the child remained unbaptized, it was kept at home and could not be visited by anyone to prevent the evil eye falling on it. It was also a target for fairies and their changelings. In Scotland, to prevent the same, newborns were given the sap of the ash tree because it was attributed with the power of preventing the attack of fairies, elves and witches (Thompson, C. J. S. 1995, 19). To avoid both things, a series of amulets were placed either on the child or the cradle. For example, in the Isle of Man, a mother would never leave her child alone without placing the tongs (fig. 36) forming a cross on the cradle to avoid the fairies coming and taking the child away but also against the influence of the evil eye. Both the cross and the material (iron) are recurring elements against overlooking and fairies.

Figure 36 Tongs. Manx Museum. Photograph by Milagros Torrado Cespón

Fire is also an important factor as we will see later on due to its purifying nature. It is also employed in connection with baptism in Scotland. There, after or before baptism, the child is passed three or four times over a fire saying three times "Let the flame consume thee now or never" (Thompson, C. J. S. 1995, 30). We also can find it used in a curing charm in Cornwall. In this case, three burning sticks from the hearth of the one suspected of being the evil eye beholder were taken. Then, the child

was walked over them three times and, finally, they were quenched with water (Hunt, R. 1908, 211).

Finally, when the child was taken to the church to be baptised it was necessary to protect it too because it was in danger in the way to the church. In the Isle of Man, it was customary for the woman carrying the child to have a piece of bread and cheese in her pocket. This food must be given to the first person she would meet so as to prevent the evil eye (Clague, J. 2005, 54). Thus, through a small present, the evil eye beholder would stop his evil intentions. In England, bread was also used as protection. In this case it was placed under the child's head to avoid the bad influence of witches (Alexander, M, 2002, 223). The seventeenth century English poet Robert Herrick explains this practice in one of his poems:

> Bring the holy crust of Bread,
> Lay it underneath the head;
> 'Tis a certain Charm to keep
> Hags away, while children sleep (Herrick, R. 1825, 122)

Bread is also used in a Scottish charm to cure the evil eye. Here the one performing the charm must carry a piece of bread and go to a stream for water. This water is placed in a pail together with a silver coin. After this, the child is sprinkled with this water and the remaining is thrown to a fixed stone (Maclagan, R.C. 1902, 155). Although the use of the bread is not explained in these examples, it does have a symbolic meaning. Both within pagan tradition and Christianity, bread is considered as the basis of nourishment and, thus, life itself. As a result, it has been considered as a symbol of fertility since antiquity. In the case of charms against the evil eye the use of bread is justified due to its relationship with fertility, which is opposed to the destructive character of the evil eye.

After baptism, children are still the objective of evil eyes and envious glances mainly from childless women. Sometimes, it was the mother who received the malign influence. In the Isle of Man, when a woman had problems recovering after childbirth, the evil eye was suspected. The remedy was secretly cutting a square piece from the neighbour's garment who was supposed to be responsible and burning it under the nose of the affected woman (Moore, A.W. 2009, 156). Again, the evil eye would be disguising illnesses which needed medical attention. Nevertheless, if we consider the evil eye as something real we can also explain why the mother (and not the child) was affected in the previous case. I was told by a Galician white witch that the evil eye may have a target but fall in another due to a matter of energy. That is, if the objective is a person spiritually strong, the evil eye would not be able to injure him and it would be passed to a person close to him and who has a weaker spirit.

A method similar to the one just seen was followed in Galway (Ireland), where, when a child was affected the cloth was also cut and burnt in front of the main door. When the child sneezed three times due to the smoke, the evil eye would be gone (Wilde, F. 1888). The origin of this practice may be in the belief that by damaging the culprit's clothes, he himself would receive the harm and would feel the need of withdrawing the curse (Jones, L. C. 1992, 164). On the other hand, in Ireland, the evil eye beholder could also perform this ceremony if he wanted to cure the one who he had overlooked. This shows us that the theory proposed by Jones could not be applied to all cases. The Irish version also provides another difference: the piece of garment cut is not the same for man or woman. For a woman, a breadth of her dress skirt is used and if a man, a piece of his coat (Thompson, E.P. 1894, 227).

However, the fact that the possessor of the evil eye would happily withdraw his curse is not the most common. In Guernsey, a little girl was dying due to the evil eye of a neighbour. Her father took a long fork and told him to remove the curse of otherwise he would kill him. The old man acceded and told the father to go to a hedge and cut an eight-inch piece of blackthorn and place it in the child's pillow for her to recover (Carey, F. & Ozanne, C. 1915, 196). Other methods were much more indirect, as those seen in the case of witch bottles. Another example which follows this procedure would be one recorded in the Isle of Man. Here, if a child was affected by an evil eye and lived in a thatched house, nine straws must be taken from the roof. After, they were boiled in water with nine needles down to half its volume and the child had to drink the water. The belief is that as the needles jump inside the boiling water, they will be pricking the hearts of whoever had laid the curse (Roper, C. 1994, 22).

The most dreaded thing for a woman was that her child received the praising from another because, unless she said "God bless it" after, she would be casting the evil eye. Ruyard Kipling reflects this in *Life's Handicap* (1915), chapter 5

> "I would have said something friendly but remembered in time that if the child fell ill afterwards I should be credited with the Evil Eye, and that is a horrible possession".

To prevent this, children were always protected by a wide variety of amulets, especially those who were really beautiful, mainly because it was not necessary that the evil eye beholder actually see the child. All that person needed was to have something which had belonged to the child, from a piece of clothing to nail pairings (Napier, J. 1879). The negative effects of praising are mainly nullified by invocating God or a blessing and when this does not happen the evil eye was almost for sure on

the child. In the Hebrides, all intention of overlooking in praising is dissipated by saying "God bless you, my eye shall not punish you"[51] (Mackenzie, W. 1895, 35). In Ross-shire (Scotland), a girl was carrying her baby sister on her back covered with a shawl to avoid envious glances. A neighbour well-known for her uncanny ways came close and took the baby's shawl back before saying "What a pretty little girl!". When both sisters came back home, the baby was ill. After being told what had happened, their mother suspected that the neighbour had overlooked the child and, calling her, she admitted that she had not blessed the child. After performing a charm, the little girl got well (Maclagan, R.C. 1902, 77).

As it was stated before, the action of fairies was sometimes confused with the action of an evil eye. John M. Synge in his *The Aran Islands* recorded an interesting case which relates the action of fairies with that of the evil eye due to the lack of praising. This shows us clearly how the line between the evil eye and fairyland was by no way clear:

> One day a neighbour was passing, and she said when she saw it on the road, "That's a fine child". Its mother tried to say, "God bless it", but something chocked the words i her throat. A while later they found a wound on its neck, and for three nights the house was filled with noises. Then a dummy came and made signs of hammering nails in a coffin. The next day the seed potatoes were full of blood, and the child told his mother that he was going to America. That night it died and "believe me", said the old man, "the fairies were in it (McCartney, E. S. 1992, 28)

In the north-east of Scotland, mothers used to pass their children three times through the petticoat or chemise the mother wore at the time of the delivery in order

[51] Gu'm beannaich an Sealbh thu; cha ghabh mo shuil ort"

to protect them from the evil eye (McCartney, E. S. 1992, 13). Also in Scotland, a similar method was used in case a couple had had problems with the evil eye with their first child. If so, an article of clothing that the mother had worn during the first night of marriage was put around the child three times as protection (Maclagan, R.C. 1902, 142). In Ireland, in case the child has already been overlooked, it is the father's suspenders and waistcoat that is used, together with the fire poker and sacred water (Gregory, L. 1992, 90). In other cases, the child's own clothes were used. A white witch from Kintyre arrived at the house of an overlooked child who was almost on his deathbed. She took the baby's close cap, went outside and pronounced a charm over it. Back in the house, she put the close cap on the child's head and he recovered (Maclagan, R.C. 1902, 197-198).

In the Western Highlands evil glances were prevented by leaving some imperfection on the child's dress from wearing something inside out from something unclean (Maclagan, R.C. 1902, 43), thus, no matter how beautiful the child was, it would not be perfect. We can find this method reflected in *A Modern Telemachus* (1886), chapter 6 by the English novelist Charlotte M. Yonge, that is, disguising the aspect of pretty children to avoid any envious desire falling on them:

> Arthur began to despair of ever gaining attention. He was allowed to wonder about as he pleased within the village gates, and Ulysse was apparently quite happy with the little children, who were beautiful and active, although kept dirty and ragged as a protection from the evil eye.

This is also a common practice in Tunisia where children were only allowed to go outside in shabby clothes or dirty to appear unattractive (Maloney, C. 1976,

64). Among the Hindus, the imperfection was achieved by applying a large spot of lampblack on the child's face (Maloney, C. 1976, 121).

However, the most efficacious method to counteract and protect from the effects of fascination has always been spitting. This is also used with adults, but seems to be a very common practice with children. In a case recorded in Scotland, the mother started to spit on the child as hard as possible to prevent the evil from the woman who had praised him (McCartney, E. S. 1992. 16). In other cases, the one suspicious of possessing the evil eye is the one who has to spit on the child. There was a case recorded in Ireland where a neighbour was called back to spit on a child he had praised without pronouncing a blessing (Gregory, L. 1992, 86). In Moll (Western Highlands) instead of spitting on the child, the mother spat on her finger and rubbed the child's eye. This practice was known as 'fiunch an t-suil' or 'eye wet' and was considered enough to prevent the effects of praising on children (Maclagan, R.C. 1902, 126). The use of saliva against the evil eye is closely related to water as we have seen in the chapter dealing with liquids and it is, maybe, the most widespread method of counteracting it all over the world.

Another typical protective device was threads. We have already seen these as an effective protection for cattle and although they were also used in adults, it was more common observing them in children. They were usually placed around the child's neck and were normally red, but the colour might vary. Although they were usually used as protection, sometimes it could be used on a child already affected. Maclagan describes the process used by a white witch in a case of cure in the Western Highlands, where the thread is said to be green:

> She took some lint that she had ready to be put on the spindle and twisted a little into a thread. It must always be green lint that is used for these threads. She made a string that would go

> three times round his neck and getting the man's knife she wound the thread round the steel, and handling it to him ordered him to hold it in his hand all the way home, and not open his hand or speak to anybody till he would reach home. He was then to put the string three times round the child's neck, and as he was getting better one string at the time was to be taken off and thrown into the fire. (Maclagan, R.C. 1902, 147).

This treatment has several interesting data apart from the use of a thread. The use of steel, fire, number three and keeping silent are all very commonly used to prevent and counteract the evil eye, each one with a specific meaning. The use of most of them or all in the same charm is a way of making it more powerful against the overlooker.

Figure 37 Luckenbooth brooch. Photograph by Milagros Torrado Cespón

Other protective devices we can find in children are the silver heart-shaped "Luckenbooth brooches" (fig. 37), which were pinned under their clothes (Calder, J. 1989, 92; Bennett, M. 1992, 30). Shiny items were widely used against the evil eye all across the world as well as it happens with silver or glass pieces: they distract the evil eye from its objective. Therefore, the fact that Luckenbooth brooches were placed under the children's clothes makes us think that their power has gone beyond their shape and material. However, in other instances, these brooches were worn on the child's clothes or even on the shawl of the mother to prevent witches from stealing their milk.

When a child is becoming very thin or lacks an appetite or cries without an apparent reason, the evil eye is always suspected. In these cases, the complexity and variety of charms can lead us to think that there is not a way of understanding why something is used in a particular charm. For example, in Stamfordham, the overlooked child or "heart grown" was taken to a blacksmith of the seventh generation and laid on the anvil. The smith would then act as if he wer going to hit the child with his hammer pretending that it were red hot iron (Henderson, W. 1879, 187).. He repeated this action three times, as it happens in many other charms The use of iron connects us again with fairies, who, as I said before, are allergic to iron and who are accused of stealing healthy children. But, in addition, blacksmiths were considered as men with special powers. So, in this case, the performance made by the smith could be seen as a way of making the fairies to come and rescue their suffering child.

One of the most complex rituals was this recorded in Sunderland in the second half of the nineteenth century:

> A charmer told the parents to come at midnight with the child to a room occupied by himself; and there a magic circle was drawn, lighted by candles placed round the circumference, and ornament by chalk drawing, supposed by the people to be representations of the planets. He took the naked child in his arms, stepped within the circle, repeated something (alleged to be the Lord's Prayer backwards) three times over, anointed the breast and forehead of the child with some mysterious unguent, waved a magic wand over its head, addressed a sort of patron angel or imp in its behalf, and then pronounced the child whole and taken from under evil spell (Henderson, W. 1879, 188).

In spite of the fact of its complexity and uniqueness among the charms studied, we still find common points: number three, the use of Christian symbols and the fire. The use of fire and also a circle (although in a very different way) is also found in another charm from the Highlands. In this case, an iron loop was wrapped with straw and impregnated with oil. After this, it was set on fire and the overlooked child was passed through it as many times as months it were old (Macinlay, J.M. 1993, 291). This ritual of passing the child through a loop reminds us of other charms used to counteract other affections such as rickets. In those cases, the child was passed through a split ash tree (Lewis, M. 1923) and, generally, three times.

12.3 Crops

Let us take a look to the *Charm for Unfruitful Land:*

> Erce, Erce, Erce, Mother of earth
> May the All-Wielder, Lord Eternal,
> Give flourishing acres of sprouting shoots,
> Acres bountiful bringing to harvest
> Tall stalks and shining growth,
> Acres of broad harvest of barley,
> Acres of white harvest of wheat,
> And all the harvest of earth!
> May Eternal God and His saints in Heaven
> Defend earth's growth from every foe
> That it may be shielded from every evil,
> And every sorcery sowed through the land.
> Now I pray the All-Wielder who shaped the world

That there be no woman so wagging of tongue,
Nor any man so cunning of craft,
That may never pervert the words thus spoken.
(Kennedy. C.W. 1960, 71)

Crops are believed to be much affected by the evil eye of envious people. The importance of the harvest for living is the main cause of this, for if your crops are overlooked, both your family and cattle will suffer from hunger. Due to this, crops are protected with special care. The above lines are part of an Anglo-Saxon charm, which started to appear in manuscripts around the tenth century, although the actual date of composition is not known. This charm was recited before the plough turned the first furrow. Even though the words "evil eye" do not appear explicitly in the text, it can be said that it is addressed to counteract it. It claims for the protection of God, the saints and Erce, the name given to the mother of earth by the Anglo-Saxons and which seems to have been a goddess. Under this shield, the harvest will be fruitful in spite of the envious words of man and woman, as it claims in lines 14 and 15.

Crops were more liable to be affected by the evil eye in their early stages. That is why there is an English saying which reads: "previous to Saint John's day, we dare not praise the barley", as before Saint John's day crops are still growing. At the same time we should mistrust the praises of a neighbour, we should also avoid pronouncing them ourselves It is interesting how this proverb includes the verb "praise", which is one of the most common ways of casting the evil eye. In Isle of Man old farmers would never let anybody go to the field to watch the corn growing during the months from sowing till reaping to avoid the evil eye[52]. Neighbours who were believed to have the power of the evil eye were dangerous if upset. There was a

[52] Folk Life Survey, unpublished. Avaliable at the Manx Museum, reference K.J./ B4

case in Guernsey in which a neighbour offended a woman which happened to posses the evil eye. His fields of wheat started to waste away. Although in this case the wheat was almost ready to harvest (Carey, F. & Ozanne, C. 1915, 198-199).

Crops could also be protected, although amulets are not frequently found. In the Isle of Man I recorded a case where a horse head was found in a field. My informant believed that it was used against the evil eye. There was a Germanic tradition which consisted of placing the so-called "envy pole" in fields against envious people. It consisted in a post and a horse skull (Schoeck, H. 1983, 28). The use of a pole can be interpreted as a phallic symbol which is a well-known anti-evil eye device. On the other hand, the horse was a sacred animal throughout northern Europe, so its presence is also justified. It is a symbol of fertility and it is linked to the harvest and the known as "Corn Spirit" because it is sometimes represented in the form of a horse or a mare. The tradition of catching the corn spirit to preserve the fruitfulness of the fields was described by the scholar James Frazer in his *Golden Bough* as follows:

> In Hertfordshire at the end of the reaping, there is or used to be observed a ceremony called "crying the Mare." The last blades of corn left standing on the field are tied together and called the Mare. The reapers stand at a distance and throw their sickles at it; he who cuts it through "has the prize, with acclamations and good cheer." After it is cut the reapers cry thrice with a loud voice, "I have her!" Others answer thrice, "What have you?"— "A Mare! a Mare! a Mare!"— "Whose is she?" is next asked thrice. "A. B.'s," naming the owner thrice. "Whither will you send her?"— "To C. D.," naming some neighbour who has not reaped all his corn. In this custom the corn-spirit in the form of a mare is passed on from a farm where the corn is all cut to another farm where it is

> still standing, and where therefore the corn-spirit may be supposed naturally to take refuge.
> (http://www.bartleby.com/196/112.html)

Moreover, the horse is also related to the sun cult because the sun was believed to ride the skies in a chariot driven by a horse and, as it will be thoroughly explained in chapter 15, the sun and the evil eye are closely related.

Witches can also be responsible for the destruction of crops, as they are also undoubted possessors of the evil eye. In another example from Guernsey, a well-known witch touched the leaves of the melon plants and they were soon covered by unknown black flies (Ozanne, C. & Carey, F. 1915, 199). It is interesting how in this case the guilty was a white witch (a male one here), because they are usually the ones who counteract the evil eye, showing that the decision between making good and evil can be interchanged

13. The Evil Eye in History and Mythology

In this section I have included those important characters who have been considered to have been victims of the evil eye or even the beholders. If we talk about mythology in the British Isles, the creature which deserves a special mention is Balor with the evil eye, the Fomorian king who was able to kill a whole army just by looking at it. Nevertheless, those affected by the evil eye and those who had its power or suffered its effects were sometimes also important characters in the history of the British Isles. The fear towards this deadly power meant that even the Danish king Hróđár, knowing the perils set in the eyes of people, warned the warrior Beówulf:

> Now is the bloom of thy strength
> For a little while,
> Soon will it be
> That sickness or the sword
> Shall part thee from thy power,
> Or clutch of fire
> Or wave of flood,
> Or gripe of sword
> Or javelin's flight,
> Or ugly age
> Or glance of eye,
> Shall oppress and darken thee! (Kemble, J. M. 1849, 431)[53]

The evil eye has also affected people belonging to higher classes. In Manx history, members of the church seem to frequently be suspicious of having the power

[53] Nú is đínes mægnes blæd/áne hwíle,/eft sona biđ/đæt đec adl ođđe ecg/eafođes get wǽ feđ,/ ođđe fýres feng,/ ođđe grípe meces,/ ođđe gáres fliht,/ ođđe atol yldo,/ ođđe eágena beorhtm,/forsitted and forsworced.

of casting the evil glance. As late as the twentieth century, a bishop from the Isle of Man was believed to posses the evil eye and, therefore, was thought to be the responsible of the illnesses of his neighbours' cattle (Gill, W.W. 1932, 177). Also in the Isle of Man in 1733 the lock man of the parish of Ballaugh accused the rector of having the evil eye because one of his heads of cattle fell before him because he did not bless the oxen team when they met. As it is customary in the isle, he took the dust from the rector's footsteps and threw it over it, which immediately recovered. In another instance, a Manx farmer assured that the vicar of Onchan had bewitched his lambs, which he had been looking at with interest (Craine, D. 2002, 12-13). But more impacting was the belief held by the Italians: they firmly thought that Pope Pius IX (1846-1878) and Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903) possessed the evil eye (Guiley, R. E. 1989, 114). The fear to the supposed malefic powers of clergy exists in many parts of the world, especially by peasants and seamen. This can be observed in Galicia, where meeting a priest on your way to work means bad luck, especially for sailors. We can suppose that this fear comes from the time of the advent of Christianity, when those bringing the new faith punished the ancestral traditions of the natives. Priests are also popularly linked to burials, so the mere mention of the word "priest" it is considered a bad omen.

Saints were not either free from this suspicion. The Irish were sure that Saint Sillan (nineteenth century) could cast a deadly evil eye to whomever he glanced at first in the morning and, as a consequence, those wanting a quick and certain death would look for him (Gifford, E. S. 1958, 51). His power came from a poisonous hair in his eyebrow which Saint Molaise plucked rendering him dead at that moment (Wilde, F. 1888).

Kings were also affected. King Corbanus was believed to have this power, as reflected in *The Life of St Ciarán of Saighir II*, written around the mid eight century:

> Another time Ciarán came to Rathdowney, and sat in council there with a great company of people. And there was there a certain King Corbanus who had destructive eyes. And he saw that the grandson of Óengus son of Nad Froích had come to them, and he looked upon him with his poisonous eyes, and the boy died atonce. And when Ciarán saw that, he was greatly angered against the king; and he rendered the king blind forthwith. The king prostrated himself before Ciarán, and he restored his sight to him; and he (the king) gave himself and all his seed to him (Ciarán). And he raised to life again the youth who had been previously killed by the poison of the king's eye. And the name of God and of Ciarán was magnified thereby.[54]

In other cases, it is the one with higher status who suffers the effects of fascination. One of the most curious cases could be that of Oscar Wilde. He firmly believed that he had been overlooked and, as a result, he had been incarcerated in Reading Gaol (Mahon, B. 1998, 156). Another example was that of the coronation of Richard, the Lion Hearted (1189). The court was so afraid that the king could be fascinated that the entrance of Jews was forbidden to the ceremony, believing that would overlook a Christian king (Maloney, C. (ed) 1976, 8).

[54] Fecht ele tainic Ciaran go Raith Tamnach, ro shuidh annsin maille le móran do dáoinibh a ccomairle. Ocus do bí annsin rex Cobranus .i. nech aga raibhe suile millteacha; doconnairc se mac meic Aengusa meic Natfraich 'ar ttecht chuca; do fhech dona suilibh neimhnecha hé, ba marbh an mac accédoir. Mar doconnairc Ciaran sin, fergaighis i nacchaid in righ, dallais accedoir an rí. Slechtais an rí do Chiaran, tucc a radharc dó, tucc he féin cona shíol dó. Ocus aithbheoaighis an maccamh fuair bás le neimh-sula an righ reimhesin; ro moradh ainm De Ciarain desin. PDE version by Jacqueline Borsje (Borsje, J. 1999, 9)

13.1 Balor of the Evil Eye

In Irish mythology we find Balor of the Evil Eye, a Fomorian leader living in Tory Island. He was said to possess an evil eye which had the power to annihilate his enemies, no matter the number, so he was considered an invincible warrior. What is not clear is how many eyes Balor had. We are told that he had "an evil eye", but this does not mean the lack of the other. In other instances, his evil eye is placed at the back of his skull and another one is in the front and the folklorist Jeremiah Curtin (1835-1906) talks about two normal eyes and a third one in the middle of his forehead (Krappe, A. H. 1927, 2) . When he acquired this terrible power, there is not mention of how many eyes he has, as we can see in the Tale of the Second Battle of Moytura or "Cath Maige Tuired":

> Lug and Balor of the piercing eye met in the battle. The latter had a destructive eye which was never opened except on a battlefield. Four men would raise the lid of the eye by a polished ring in its lid. The host which looked at that eye, even if they were many thousands in number, would offer no resistance to warriors. It had that poisonous power for this reason: once his father's druids were brewing magic. He came and looked over the window, and the fumes of the concoction affected the eye and the venomous power of the brew settled in it (Borsje, J. 1999, 5)[55]

In the case of having a single eye, we have to take into account that it was said that the eyelid of Balor's evil eye was so heavy that it needed the help of several

[55] Imma-comairnic de Luc di Bolur Birugderc esin cat[h]. Súil milldagach le suide. Ní ho(r)scailtie inn sóul acht i rroí catae nammá. Cetrar turcbaud a malaig die shól conu drolum omlithi triena malaig. Slúoac[h] do-n-éceud darsan sól, nín-géptis fri hócco, cíe pidis lir ilmíli. Es de boí inn nem-sin fuirri(r) .i. druíth a adhar bótar oc fulucht draígechtae. Tánic-seum ruderc tarsan fundéoic, co ndechaid dé en foulachtae fuithi gonid forsan súil dodecaid nem an foulachta íer sin.

men to raise it and, when this was done, his glance would destroy everything at his sight. Consequently, this would mean that Balor would be blind. The scholar Adrian Loaghrian suggests that Balor had two eyes but he lost one of them to his wife Caitlin, identified as a cat (Mackay, R. C. 1997) Following Curtin theory, we can relate him to the Greek Cyclops, who had a single eye in the middle of their foreheads and whose eye stands for the sun (Krappe, A. H. 1927, 9), thus establishing a strong link between the power of an evil eye and the sun. But this link can be proved to be stronger because it seems that his name originally meant "the gleaming" (Curran, B. 2000, 112). The Greek historian Diodorus of Sicily (first century BC) talked about the inhabitants of Belerion in Britannia. This promontory can be identified with Penwith peninsula, in the Cornish Land's End. From the second century, Ptolomeo identifies Land's End as Bolerium. This is a name which comes from the same root of the Celtic deity Belenos, considered as an equivalent of Apolo, and which also means "the gleaming" (Cunliffe, B. 2002, 76-77). He also is related to the god Nét, who was believed to be Balor's grandfather and who is identified with the setting sun.

Apart from the evident relationship between fascination and Balor of the Evil Eye, we can find further links if we analysed this mythological creature. We have to start by taking a look to the genealogical tree of this character because it establishes some interesting connections between mythology and the evil eye tradition. The story of Balor links two important Celtic sagas: the Fomorians and the Tuatha de Dannans.

The Fomorians were believed to be of uncertain origin. Sometimes they are considered ferocious pirates, but, the general belief considers them of divine origin (Mackillop, J. 2004, 239). One of their major representatives came to be Balor of the

Evil Eye. The Tuatha de Dannans were the children of god Danu, but the story of the origins of the Tuatha de Dannans has various versions. The account given by Doctor Lloyd D. Graham integrated them all and it is worth reproducing it:

> After the defeat of the Nemedians at Conaing's Tower, the seed of Bethach s. Iarbonel the Soothsayer s. Nemed fled from Ireland into the north of the world (to wit, northeast of Scandinavia) where they learned magic and wizardry. There were four cities where they acquired this knowledge, to wit Failias, Goirias, Findias, & Muirias. Thereafter they went to Greece for further training and to seek "the maiden", whom they captured. During their there they were accounted poets of the Greeks, and they had a special power sailing together on the seas without the need for ships. After their training in Greece was complete, they travelled to Dobar and Iardobar (poss. River Dour, Aberdeenshre) in north Scotland, where Nuada was their king for 4-7 years. Then they came in dark clouds to Ireland, and alighted on the mountain of Clonmaicne Rein (identified as being in southern Leitrim); or alternatively, they came to Ireland in ships, which they burnt on landing, and proceeded under cover of the dark clouds of steam and smole to Sliabh an Iarinn (a mountain in Co. Leitrim, which still bears this name) (Graham, L. D. 2002)

The Tuatha de Dannans were a very important family in Irish culture. The famous hero of the Ulster, Cúchulainn, belonged to it, as he was the son of Lug and considered the personification of the sun god himself. Brigit, now under the invocation of Saint Brigit, was also part of this family.

Although Fomorians and Tuatha de Dannans were enemies, they intermingled. This brought the destruction to Balor, of the Evil Eye, who was doomed to die at the hands of his grandson, son of his daughter and a Tuatha de

Dannan. The tale of the death of Balor of the Evil Eye seems to have two main versions. In one, his grandson is given usually no name and kills him for having murdered his father and having stolen the "Glas Gaivlen", a cow belonging to his paternal family which was very lactiferous. In the other, he is the sun god Lugh, who kills his grandfather Balor in the battlefield. Between these two versions, the one which better fulfils our objectives is the second one: it links the evil eye with a solar cult. Lugh, which festival is held at Lughnasad, is a solar deity. At the same time, the fact of representing Balor with one big evil eye thus identifies him as a solar symbol which has the power of forgiving or killing at his will. But we can go even further: Balor's grandfather (or father, depending on the version) was Nét, related to the setting sun. The interaction between Balor and Lugh gives also another perception of their role as solar deities. Thus, as explained by the Professor Miranda Green, Balor would represent "the negative forces of evil and evil eye, whose power could only be neutralized by the positive light force represented by Lugh" (Green, M. 1992, 38). However, in the first version, Lug, who works as a smith, kills Balor by thrusting a red hot iron bar in his eye, while in the other he uses a sling-stone. Now, the first account gives as another link with the evil eye: the use of iron against it and the status of blacksmiths as powerful men. Nevertheless, both stories intermingle and other versions add different data to the myth. Thus, we cannot assure which one is the original one.

Nowadays the myth of Balor of the Evil Eye is still alive. The Northern Irish Celtic folk metal band Waylander, created in 1993, includes among the songs of its fourth album published in 2001 the song "Balor of the Evil Eye" which shows the most important data about the myth:

Fomorian lord ruled with an iron hand

Piracy maintained by this darkened god
Tyrannical reign, o'er Eireann's sons
Starve and shame, into submission one and all
Disciples of chaos - disrupting
Destroyer of order - dominating
Tipping the balance - oblivion
Extinguishing light - darkness
Dominate de Danann, strip away then pride
Threat them like tenants, there's no place to hide
A tribute collected, heads hung in disgrace
Hollow eyes of defeat, proud race losing face.
Balor - Evil Eye
One look - you will die
Balor - Evil Eye
Unleashed - strangled cry.
There's one spark amongst the dying embers
Born to ignite red passions raging
Lugh Samildeanach, true inspiration
Equilibrium by sword and sorcery.
Chaos king meets prince of light
Fulfilling omens of foresight
'Twas written blood must slay blood
Symbolic duel, redress the balance.
Sword of Light
Quell the darkness
Shield of order
Vanquish the chaos

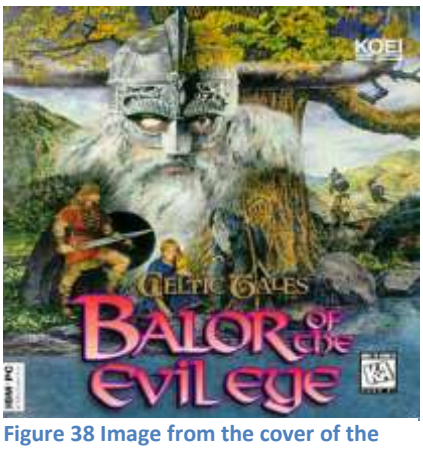

Figure 38 Image from the cover of the videogame "Balor of the Evil Eye", created by the Japanesse video game publisher Koei.

It is also possible to emulate the combat of the Fomorian warrior in a videogame named *Celtic Tales – Balor of the Evil Eye* (fig. 38). This is a way of showing how Irish mythology has crossed frontiers, arriving even to Japan.

13.2 The Gorgon

The gorgon (fig. 39) or medusa is of Greek origin. Nevertheless, the Roman invasions took it to the British Isles. Its use is recorded in England as a protective device in small amulets (Meaney, A. L. 1981, 74) or as bigger representations, as the supposed Medusa found in Bath, which, in spite of being considered as such its form does not remind us of a Medusa, but of a masculine figure which looks more like a Green Man. Although interesting, the discussion of this topic deserves a further development in a separate work.

Figure 39 Gorgon from Silicy, 490 BC. British Museum. Photograph by Milagros Torrado Cespón

The myth of the Gorgon or Gorgons (because they were originally three) has many points in common with the evil eye tradition in the British Isles. We can start with the symbolism of number three in the origin of its myth. The Gorgons were three, two of them immortal and the other, Medusa, mortal. The one with the power of killing with her glance was Medusa, who even after Perseus had cut her head off had the power of murdering in her eyes turning anybody she looked at into stone.

The appearance of the Gorgon-Medusa as a woman with snakes instead of hairs is included in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, but it is not the original description. The three Gorgons had "scaly heads, boar's tusks, brazen hands, and wings (...),

protruding tongues, glaring eyes, and serpents wrapped around their waists as belts" (Wilk, S. R. 2000, 21). Any of these two descriptions includes snakes and, therefore, it is easy to link medusa to the basilisk and the power of fascination because serpents are believed to posses it too.

14. Envy and Society: Fascination from a Psychological Point of View

I would like to start this chapter with a fragment from the novel *Sister Carrie*, by the American Theodore Dreiser, which, from my point of view, perfectly exemplifies the moment in which humankind is living now:

> Our society is still in a middle stage, scarcely beast, in that it is no longer wholly guided by instinct; scarcely human, in that it is not yet wholly guided by reason. *Sister Carrie* (Dreiser, T. 1970, 56)

Dreiser's words even though placed in a novel can be fully applied to real life. The evolution of our technology seems, many times, to overcome the rhythm of developing of our mind providing us with a feeling of inferiority and insignificance in comparison with what we can create. It is then when we should go for a walk and pay attention to the little things, from the colours in a minute beetle to the magnificence of an old oak. Thus, we really realize that we are still in that middle stage. The complexity of the natural world which surrounds us is bigger than any invented human device. Sometimes it would be just right to sit down and feel what surrounds us, although running the risk of finding feelings we do not like.

As fascination is a human invention too, it is necessary to reflect upon the parts of our subconscious which have a role in it. If we want to take a look at the psychological aspects of the evil eye, there are three main factors to take into account: envy, both as a feeling and as sin; love, both as positive and as negative;

and cultural background and conditioning, which has already been influenced by both envy and love.

14.1 Envy

The belief in the power of fascination or "evil eye" is considered by most people as an old-fashioned superstition which is far away from the urban lifestyle in which we are so proud to live now. Sometimes, we find references to this phenomenon in literary texts which attribute it to other countries. For example, in *A Rough Shaking* (1891), chapter 9, by the Scottish author George MacDonald we can read:

> "He was a favourite with few beyond those that knew him well. Many who saw him only at the church, or about the village, did not take to him. His still regard repelled them. In Naples they would have said he had the evil eye"

Or in the novel by the also Scottish Sir Walter Scott, *Guy Mannering* (1815), chapter 24:

> "'It is very frightful', answered Julia, 'and almost reminds me of the tales of sorceresses, witches, and evil genii which I have heard in India. They believe there in a fascination of the eye by which those who posses it control the will and dictate the motions of their victims".

In others, this belief is attributed to ancient times when paganism was still present, as it happens in the English G.A. Henty's *By England's Aid or the Freeing*

of the Netherlands (1585-1604) (1891), where he read that the evil eye was a matter of that time:

> "It was an age when there were still many superstitions current in the land. Even the upper classes believed in witches and warlocks, in charms and spells, in lucky and unlucky days, in the arts of magic, in the power of the evil eye."

However, we must realize that societies which have been ruled by a multi-deity religion, pantheism and paganism will always be present. This means that, although we now trust more in technology and science, there is always a place for traditional beliefs which do not necessary belong to the religion in which we have been indoctrinated, but which have survived in spite of it. Maybe, we should think that if something has remained from immemorial times, this is because it has helped somehow to those societies using it. Fascination is something that it is present in almost all cultures world-wide and in them all it has common roots: envy and, sometimes, love. Francis Bacon related both with the evil eye in his *Essays. Moral, Economical, and Political*:

> There be none of the affections which have been noted to fascinate, or bewitch, but love and envy: they both have vehement wishes; they frame themselves readily into imaginations and suggestions; and they come easily into the eye, especially upon the presence of the objects which are the points that conduce to fascination, if any such thing there be. We see, likewise, the scripture calleth envy an evil eye; and the astrologers call the evil influences of the stars evil aspects, so that still there seemeth to be acknowledged, in the act of envy, an ejaculation, or irradiation of the eye (Bacon, F. 1828, 30-31).

We have already stated that the evil eye is a curse that can affect people, animals, crops or any other thing considered valuable by its owner when another being looks at them. The victims of this evil suffer from envy, considered as one of the worst characteristics of the human being, "for all evill demyng commeþ of envie", as a medieval English sermon stated (Ross, W. O. 1960, 121). The English novelist Gilbert Keith Chesterton identifies the evil eye as a characteristic of envy in *The Napoleon of Notting Hill* (1904), chapter 13:

> "I have even heard, and with deep pain I have heard it, that the evil eye of our imperial envy has been cast towards the remote horizon of the west, and that we have objected to the great black monument of a crowned raven, which commemorates the skirmish of Ravenscourt Park."

Envy produces in us an involuntary (or not) desire of causing misfortune to those who have luck and an easier life than us, better properties, are more beautiful, more intelligent or have just achieved something that seems unreachable for us. Shakespeare exemplifies how being considered as superior can trigger envy in *Cymbeline* (1611), act 2, scene II:

> IMOGEN
> Profane fellow
> Wert thou the son of Jupiter and no more
> But what thou art besides, thou wert too base
> To be his groom: thou wert dignified enough,
> Even to the point of envy, if 'twere made
> Comparative for your virtues, to be styled
> The under-hangman of his kingdom, and hated
> For being preferred so well.

However, it is curious how sometimes we want to be envied because this means that we have achieved a higher status. We find a clear example of this in Jane Austen's *Emma* (1815), chapter 7:

> One should be sorry to see greater pride or refinement in the teacher of a school, Harriet. I dare say Miss Nash would envy you such an opportunity as this of being married.

Envy causes, moreover, an inexplicable anger which shows up our little value as social animals. This leads us to a question: why does the human being wish evil to his fellow beings if, if this has the expectable result, it is not going to change his position? In *The Book of Vices and Virtues* (fourteenth century) we can read that "þe envyous may not see good bi oþere, ne see who-so helpeþ hym, no more þan a bake may suffer to see þe schynyng of þe sonne" (Francis, W. N. 1968, 22); and, what it is more, if the success achieved by the other can be good in any sense for the envious being, he would not gladly accept it because the envious person prefers continuing in a bad situation before than seeing someone helping him. Therefore, we can assume that the envious person is so into the task of feeling sorry for himself that he does not stop to think about how he can improve his situation. He even rejects being helped by others in a better position and prefers the destruction of that which has been achieved by others, it does not matter whether it has been achieved by his own means or not, or if that will imply some benefice.

Another way of interpreting the envious behaviour is equality. This destructive feeling can derive from an excessive longing for a world with no differences: that which makes the other stand out must be destroyed in order to avoid dissimilarities. We can see some examples derived from the evolution of this conduct day by day when someone admired by many people is criticized about the most banal

things and thus prevent him to achieve perfection. There are clear cases of this behaviour in current gossiping programs and magazines where the main aim seems to find why somebody cannot be better than us without tricks. Maybe we do such things because we are afraid of being rejected, which means that envy tries to help us in our insecurities. Unfortunately, we still carry on thinking that differences are bad in some sense without realizing that they are what enrich the world and make people and cultures interesting. The human being, who is supposed to be good by nature (as Rousseau said), succumbs to a dark side when, within a society, he allows himself to be swept away by his fears and feelings of inferiority and, why not, by the survival instinct in the jungle of the best. The individual has learnt that if he does not want to die in this battle, he must fight and, for those too lazy, too coward, too insecure or, even, too tired to fight, envy was created. It is easier enhancing those defects in our fellows than trying to follow their steps and become better. Nevertheless, even those supposed to have reached success suffer, for sure, from envy, for it is impossible to get all we want. There will always be somebody better than oneself. So, envy has come to be considered as something unavoidable, even for those kind-hearted. Thus, a new concept of envy appears: healthy envy. Therefore, although envy goes on being a bad characteristic of human behaviour, sometimes it is permissible feeling it when its direct consequence is a wish of achieving the status envied and not destroying it. This type of envy is openly manifested, being taken as a compliment, as in, for example, Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* (1818), chapter 7:

> "How delightful that will be!" cried Isabella turning around.
> "My dearest Catherine, I quite envy you".

This feeling, as well as having been created by society, has also been repressed by it. After centuries and centuries of preachers telling us how wrong is

feeling envy that "of all the synnes in þe world, envi is on of þe gretest, for it is even contrary to charite, þat is chef of all vertwes", as this medieval speech reminds us (Ross, W. O. 1960, 232), we have learnt to repress it by disguising it. As a result, the belief in the evil eye comes from this longing of control over envy. A power that cannot be controlled: the force which comes out the eyes. From Balor, of the Evil Eye, in Irish mythology to the fear of a mother before the envious glance of another over her beloved child, covetous reaction can be concealed (better or worse) in the existence of the evil eye. It is wrong yearning for other's goods; it is even worse desiring their destruction. So, the best method of letting out this feeling is sheltering in curse and superstition. Let us see it in this way: we cannot be envious because it is socially wrong but if a higher force causes the loss of all of our neighbour's cattle we do not have to feel guilty because it is not our fault: it is the evil eye's fault. Sometimes the evil eye is cast by someone who does not want to do it but that has this power, as it happened to a certain person in Ireland. There was a man who caused so many misfortunes due to his evil eye that his neighbours obliged him to wear a black patch over the eye in question. The same happened to a man in Velle (Ourense, Galicia) where a man, knowing the existence of his evil eye, wore dark glasses all the time. Once, he was not wearing them and looked at four little pigs: they died at that moment (Lis Quibén V. 1980, 92).

The envious being does not want to improve, but maintains the hope of seeing the others under his level, as it is well explained in another medieval sermon: "þat couetes nothynge so mykyll as other mennes noye and dysease, and sore it hym greues þat other men well faren" (Woodburn, O. R. 1960, 299). The world surrounding him will always make him feel inferior and this feeling of inferiority is what causes that ill-wish against his fellows. We can think that it is obvious that a

human being living on his own and without contact with others of his kind would never feel envy because he would not have nobody who would threaten his superiority, so society is, without any doubt, the one to blame. When the primitive man finds him in an environment where he has to share and, above all, compete, he forgets the principles inflicted by the individuals of the society to which he belongs now. Envy is wrong, but it is the society which provokes this feeling. Because society, now seen as a collective living being, tries to keep an equilibrium imposing a series of rules in order to regulate the behaviour of its members. A good example of this is religion. In Catholicism envy is seen as one of the seven deadly sins and there is a commandment which urges us not to covet others' goods. These orders, disguised as religion, are longing for a non problematic and pacific society but through a method which chokes our subconscious and our instinct of survival. That is self-control. Paradoxically, self-control makes human beings freer. A society controlled in a reasonable manner avoids chaos and promulgates coexistence. The survival of the fittest stops being the most important and all the members are able to reach aims which would be impossible in a non-controlled society. We can even qualify this as a type of repression without the negative connotations of lack of freedom. As a result, and in spite of the negative connotations it may have, we have to see repression as part of evolution. Once the human being decided living accompanied by other members of the specie, he got in return support, help and cooperation from the newborn society. This meant an improvement in living conditions, but also meant the sacrifice of the most irrational impulses and wishes in order to be accepted by the other members of the group. Thus, from a being governed by the amygdale, the instinctive part of our brain, we find the homo sapiens, a being able to discriminate bad from good not just as part of its own survival, but as part of

the survival of the society, even if for achieving this the hominid had had to renounce to ancestral impulses.

Nevertheless, we could even go further by believing that even in the case a human could live perfectly separated from society he would feel envy too. He would envy birds because they can fly and fishes because they can breathe under the water. Envy could then be considered the motor which moves our lives to improve and thus inventing new machines which can provide us with that nature has not given to our species.

Taking envy as part of those repressed impulses, we see in the power of the tradition of evil eye a way out for expressing what we consider morally wrong. We could even see the belief in the evil eye and its practice as mild manifestation of psychosis where the person needs to hide a feeling (in this case an unaccepted feeling as it is envy) under the appearance of an external factor (the evil eye tradition) which, in fact, emanates from himself. So, as Freud states (Freud, S. 1992, 310), every process is part of the psychic system of the unconscious and, after and under particular circumstances, it may get through the conscious system. In other words, envy is part of our unconscious but it cannot get thought the conscious system freely for it is frowned upon by society; therefore, if it appears disguised as a superstition which, although not completely acceptable, is at least permissible. In 1661, at Youghall (Ireland) a woman was tried for bewitching another. She denied this fact, but admitted that she might have overlooked her (Dalyell, J. G. 1836, 10). Nowadays, nobody would judge another who believes in evil eye, as it is part of popular tradition and it is considered as a superstition, however, it would be different if one longs publically for a neighbour's misfortune if this has triumphed in life: that person would be scorned by his fellows.

But the evil eye went a step forward. As a supernatural power it became the justification for all the illnesses which had not a known origin, especially mental illnesses and psychological problems (mainly depression and schizophrenia). These disorders have been hidden under the appearance of the evil eye mysticism for many centuries with no more treatment than that of charms and special rituals. When somebody suffered an illness of the soul, that person was for sure a victim of envy or of the Devil, which, in many cases, came to be the same.

The need in believing that something superior rules our world in opposition to our will means, nevertheless, alleviation. Nothing can be done against the magic factors which affect our existence but trust in the mediation of a special element or a protective deity. Human being, unable to solve many problems, finds in superstition a way out for his desperate unconscious. We could even state that the belief in the evil eye represents a relief for our worried mind which fights against the unknown and feels, impotently that he cannot find the necessary answer neither going through the path of science nor the path of superstition.

Maybe in a following step of our evolution we will be able to get rid of the belief in the evil eye, but, we will not be able to get rid of envy completely. Envy is part of our survival instinct as hunting is part of the survival instinct of a cat, no matter how domesticated it be. It could be hidden, but not removed.

14.2 Love

Love also deserves a place in this chapter because it can modify our behaviour as much as envy. Bacon said that love also fascinates as we could learn

from the quote mentioned before. In the case of love we have to take a look from a different point of view, because love, by definition, is not an evil emotion. On the one hand, this is a feeling considered as good by society as a whole. On the other, it is considered as a symbol of God in Catholicism, as we can read in the Bible, in John 1, 4:8: "Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love". After the advent of Jesus Christ, the Ten Commandments were summarized into two: loving your God over anything and love your neighbour as yourself. This implies that, as an order given by God, it cannot be harmful. However, what makes love destructive is, in fact being in love and not being loved in return. That is, someone is fascinated by the loved one and loses real perception of life; he can see no wrong in the other even if it is evident. We can compare the characteristics of those affected by the evil eye with those in unrequited love: lack of appetite, sadness, difficulty in concentration. It is like that person lies under a spell, so we could take for sure Bacon's affirmation. This fascinated love also gives way to another destructive feeling comparable to envy: jealousy.

As opposed to the envious person, the jealous does not covet what belongs to another, but he is terrified in the view of the possibility of losing the beloved one. This feeling can sometimes conduct to the annihilation of the object of adoration before it is taken away by another, implying also egoism. A clear example is the behaviour of Shakespeare's *Othello* (1604), who murders Desdemona in an explosion of jealousy. In this play, he prefers killing his wife rather than believing her, as she tries to explain him in act V, scene II:

> DESDEMONA: And have you mercy too! I never did
> Offend you in my life; never loved Cassio
> But with such general warranty of heaven

As I might love: I never gave him token.

OTHELLO: By heaven, I saw my handkerchief in's hand.
O perjured woman! thou dost stone my heart,
And makest me call what I intend to do
A murder, which I thought a sacrifice:
I saw the handkerchief.

DESDEMONA: He found it then;
I never gave it him: send for him hither;
Let him confess a truth.

OTHELLO: He hath confess'd.

DESDEMONA: What, my lord?

OTHELLO: That he hath used thee.

Jealousy makes the character of Othello being stubborn and inflexible: what the others say (in this case Cassio) it is more important than what the beloved says. Consequently, jealousy transforms the object of love in a traitor who only attempts to hurt creating a feeling of destruction in the jealous one which derives, in this case, in the murder of Desdemona (fig. 40). Therefore, as we can observe, jealousy, as well as envy, reveals the insecurity of its sufferer.

Figure 40 Othello and Desdemona. Picture by Josiah Boydell, 1803. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Josiah_Boydell_Desdemona_in_bed_asleep_-_Othello_Act_V_scene_2.jpg

Manx folk considered jealousy also a way of bewitchment, because they used the same word for both: "buitched". In the case a newly married couple were affected by the jealousy of a former suitor, she must take a bullock's heart and stick it all over with pins and then boil it at midnight with all the doors tightly shut. Thus the suitor would come to the house to talk (Gill, W.W. 2002, 23). This remedy is very spread across the British Isle also to counteract the effects of the evil eye as we have already seen.

However, love is also a mode of fascination which has nothing to do with jealousy. I am now talking about the uncontrollable attraction a lover may feel to the beloved leaving him helpless. This appears very frequently reflected in literature, mainly when talking about a woman. Sir Walter Scott shows this in *Ivanhoe* (1819), chapter 23:

> 'Alas! Fair Rowena', returned De Bracy, 'you are in presence of your captive, not your jailer; and it is from your fair eyes that De Bracy must receive that doom which you fondly expect from him'.

In Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (1597), Romeo confesses Juliet in act II, scene 2:

> "Alack, there lies more peril in thine eye
> Than twenty of their swords: look thou but sweet,
> And I am proof against their enemity"

In these cases, the lover submits to the desires of loving one, with no will, unable to eat or sleep, loosing physical and psychical strength. As it can be noticed, these are again the same symptoms of one affected by the evil eye. The one suffering the bewitchment of love cannot admit the wrongs of the other, his misbehaviour and,

in extreme cases, his aggressions. In those extreme cases, the worst is that those involved in this situation are not able, in many occasions, to recognize that this kind of "love" is not related at all with the definition we can find in any dictionary. We could say that this type of fascination is the most destructive of all because in this case we are not facing folklore, but a real life problem which persist in the twentieth-first century.

14.3 Cultural Background and Conditioning

The effects of the evil eye can also be determined by the way we were brought up or the cultural background that surrounds us. Thus, those who have been educated in an environment where the belief of the evil eye is common are more prone to consider its influence when misfortune attacks them. On the other hand, if somebody has been raised in an environment where this tradition is unknown or demystified, it is unlikely that that person attributes his troubles to the action of an evil eye, even though he is told so. Therefore, we could say that the point up to which we are more likely to feel the attack of fascination as real depends on the grade in which our brain is conditioned to believe in its power. In extreme cases, this conditioning could even be equated to hypnotism. That is, hypnotism can be considered as a method through which an individual is able to submit the conduct of another to his will. In the same way, the "bewitched" is laying under the "spell" of a tradition which is openly accepted in a society. The power of conditioning is such that can even lead us to firmly believe that stopping doing something can bring us bad luck or that seeing a determinate animal is a bad omen. Once, I was in the

hospital and suddenly a magpie appeared outside the window. The other man in the room said "a magpie, bad thing" and we all started to tremble thinking that the magpie was there, for sure, to indicate us a tragic result[56]. Thus, if you firmly believe in the evil eye power, it can cause in you from illness to death not because you are really ill, but because your brain believes so. In this respect, we can also relate the evil eye tradition to a case of mass hysteria where those surrounding the sick absolutely believe in its power and this derives in a sort of psychological epidemic which everybody is afraid to suffer. But in this case, the hysteria can be appeased by using protective devices to avert the action of the baleful glance. In societies where superstition still has an important role, mafias threaten people with sorceries. An example of this is what happens with many exploited immigrants who are obliged to work in unfair conditions or to prostitute fearing the fatal consequences of a curse in their countries of origin[57]. In the British Isles the belief in the evil eye was well maintained until the mid twentieth century although not with the same strength it has in some developing countries.

[56] The presence of a single magpie is considered as a bad omen in Galicia as well as in all the British Isles. The above mentioned happened at the University hospital of Santiago de Compostela where a group of magpies can be find frequently. The fact of finding one at a hospital can assure its power as people die every day there. On the other hand, three magpies are usually a sign of a birth, which is also something that happens every day at a hospital.

[57] I was told this by a member of the police in Madrid who deals with this type of superstitions every day, especially with people from African countries.

15. The Solar Theory

Throughout the pages of this thesis I have been given examples of charms and amulets which bear some or much relationship to the sun, either by direct allusion or by means of a more earthly representation as fire, mirrors or any shining item. If we think for a while in that coincidence, we can realize that the importance of the sun is especially significant, maybe too important to consider it just a mere coincidence. In this section, I am going to try proving the connection of the sun with the origin of the evil eye belief. This theory has already been sketched in a previous work (Green, M. 1991) but in a more general and brief way. Doctor Miranda Green explains the identification of the sun with an eye since antiquity and also its role as god. It is the giver of life, but also has the power of destruction. Taking doctor Green theory as a starting point, I decided to centre on examples from the British Isles which give further strength to the theory from the point of view of the topic of this thesis, although it could be proved taking examples from other parts of the world. My theory not only identifies the origin of fascination in solar cults, but also explains how this belief has become a characteristic of the human being.

The first and main reason for identifying the sun as the origin of the evil eye is in its resemblance with an eye (fig. 41). If we think about the setting sun, we can easily identify it with this organ. The representation of the sun as an eye is present in most cultures. The Pigmies and the Bushmen consider sun as the eye of their main god. The Samoyeds also include the moon in this identification, considering the sun as the god eye and the moon as the evil eye (Cirlot, J. E. 2002). If we take a look at Irish and Welsh Gaelic, we can also find evidences of the identification of the sun

with an eye from a linguistic point of view. The Irish word for "eye" is "suil", which, originally meant "sun". In the case of Welsh we find something similar: "haul",

Figure 41 Setting sun. Photograph by Milagros Torrado Cespón

Welsh for "sun" was also an old word for "eye" (Mackillop, J. 2004, 174). John Milton also makes reference this resemblance in his *Paradise Lost*, book V: "Thou Sun, of this great world both eye and soul". In Scotland we can also find the following prayer addressed to the sun which makes a clear reference to its similitude with an eye also identifying it as the eye of God:

> The eye of the great God,
> The eye of the God of glory,
> The eye of the King of hosts,
> The eye of the King of the living
> Pouring upon us
> At each time and season,
> Pouring upon us
> Gently and generously.
> Glory to thee,
> Thou glorious sun.
> Glory to thee, thou sun,
> Face of the God of life.[58] (Carmichael, A. 2007, 291-292)

[58] Sùil Dhé mhóir, / Sùil Dhé na glòir, / Sùil Righ nan slógh, / Sùil Righ nam beò. / Dòrtadh oirnne /gach óil agus ial, / Dórtadh oirnne /gu foil agus gu fiel. / Glòi dhuit fhéin, /a ghréin an àigh. / Glòir dhuit fhéin, a ghréin, / a ghnùis Dhè nan dùl. (West, M. L. 2007, 216).

This identification with an eye also appears in literature, for example, in Shakespeare's eighteenth sonnet (1609):

> Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
> And often is his gold complexion dimmed,
> And every fair from fair sometime declines,
> By chance, or nature's changing course untrimmed

A better example of the sun as an eye can be found in Dickens' *Hard Times* (1854), chapter 17, which offers us its identification with an evil eye, showing its voluble personality:

> But the sun itself, however beneficent, generally, was less kind to Coketown than hard frost, and rarely looked intently into any of its closer regions without engendering more death that life. So does the eye of Heaven itself become an evil eye, when incapable or sordid hands are interposed between it and the things it look upon to bless.

With the passing of time, we can also find similar references in music, as it can be seen in the song "Eye in the Sky" by the British group Allan Parson's Project. This song goes a step further and identifies this "eye in the sky" with a god:

> I am the eye in the sky looking at you
> I can read your mind.
> I the maker of rules dealing with fools
> I can cheat you blind.

Thus, the sun has also the rank of god and giver of life, so this lead to a large amount of folklore around it. Being a powerful being, the sun can perform evil or good at its will. In the Exeter Book (tenth century) we find the following riddle about the sun which explains its role and characteristics:

> Christ, the true Lord of Victories
> Created me for battle, I often burn living creatures,
> And when close to the earth grievously oppress
> Countless races, yet without touching them at all.
> When my Lord commands me to fight.
> Sometimes I comfort those whom I have been attacking
> Strongly from afar. Yet they feel my attack
> And also my comfort, when, over the stormy deep.
> I again improve their condition of life (Mackie, W. S. 1958, 96).[59]

Obviously the advent of Christianity has influenced the significance of the sun as a deity. At this stage (tenth century) it was still too early to pretend that the role of the sun was insignificant, so it was necessary provide it with some godlike power to placate those who still were far from being converted. The representations of God that we find in many Christian churches are frequently an eye in a triangle (fig. 42), mixing the concept of the eye in the sky and the symbolism of number three.

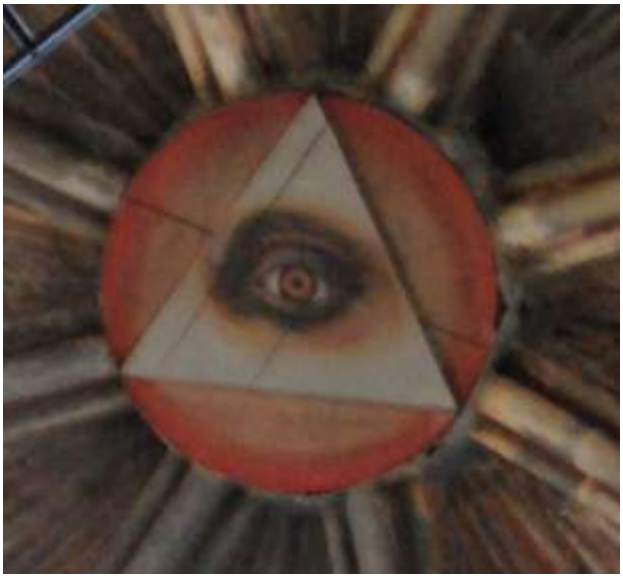

Figure 42 Representation of the Christian God in a triangle. Santiago de Compostela Cathedral. Photograph by Milagros Torrado Cespón

In spite of the arrival of the new religion to the British Isles, the respect towards the sun was kept unconsciously. As a consequence of the veneration towards the solar deity, anything must be done respecting the course of the sun, that is

[59] Mec gesette soð sigora waldend/crist to compe oft ic cwice bærne/unrimu cyn eorþan getenge/næte mid niþe swa ic him no hrine./þonne mecmin frea feohtan hateþ/hwilum ic monigra moda rete/hwilum ic frefre þa ic ær winne· *ón/feorran swiþe hi þæs felað þeah/swyle þæs oþres þonne ic eft hyra/ofer deop gedreag drohtað bete.

clockwise, or "deasil", as it was named in the Celtic speaking areas in the British Isles. This is something which still survives in solemn acts such as when carrying a coffin out of the church or in any type of curative ritual, including those against the evil eye. In the case someone go around another person in the opposite direction or "withersins", he would bring ill fortune to that person (Henderson, W. 1879, 61). In Scotland, it was customary reciting the following on the feast of Saint Mary (fifteenth August), showing again a mixture of pagan and Christian:

> I went sunways round my dwelling,
> In name of Mary Mother,
> Who promised to preserve me,
> And who will preserve me,
> In peace, in flocks
> In righteousness of heart (Carmichael, A. 1900 vol. I, 196-197)[60]

It seems that the cult of the sun was too strong in the British Isles to be completely erased. This has happened with many other pre-Christian aspects, as we have already seen, but in the case of sun it is more significant. In this instance, we are facing the cult of a deity which was occupying the place of the Christian and Jew god. Some would see it a threat or an obstacle to the introduction of a new faith. Christians, on the other hand, were able to transform it at their will.

When talking about labour, it was also preferable to follow the path of the sun. In West Cornwall, before starting ploughing, the workers solemnly turned the faces of the cattle driving the plough towards the west and said "In the name of God let us begin" and then began following the course of the sun (Courtney, M. A. 1887,

[60] Chaidh mi deiseil m'fhardrach / an ainm Mhoire Mhathar, / agheall mo ghleidheadh, / a rinn mo gheidneadh, / a nimo ghleigheadh, / ann an sith, ann an ni, / ann am fireantas cri.

192). The Scottish folk also take this into account when marking the lambs, when they used to recite:

> My knife will be new, keen, clean, without stain,
> My plaid beneath my knee with my red robe,
> I will put sunwise round my breast the first cut for luck,
> The next one after that with the sun as it moves (Carmichael,
> A. 1900 vol. I, 292.293).[61]

Following the course of the sun can be considered as a way of showing respect towards the god and thus asking it for its protection.

Figure 43 Udjat. British Museum. Photograph by Milagros Torrado Cespón

Up to this point, we can clearly observe that the sun had the status of god from ancient times in cultures from the Egyptian to those existent in the British Isles. If we think about Egypt, we find the solar god Ra, whose symbol the *udjat* (fig. 43), is still used as an amulet against the evil eye in the present time. The udjat (right eye) was also considered the representation of the sun itself and this conferred it potent magical powers (Álvarez Suárez, M. 2002, 526). In the British Isles, we may think about Balor of the Evil Eye and Lug, both sun gods and both closely related to fascination as I have already explained in a previous chapter. In spite of the fact the obvious distance between both countries, we can find cultural connections in other aspects of their traditions. Lady Francesca Wilde recorded a curious custom performed in Ireland at the wake of

[61] Sith mo sgian ur, geur, glan, gun mheirg, / mo bhreacan fo m'ghlun le mo luirich dheirg. / cuiream deiseil mo chleibh an ceud bheum gu sealbn, / an oth fhear na dheigh leis aghrein mar nifalbn.

the Irish peasants derived from ancient Egyptian funeral ceremonies. Here a man and a woman carried a head of an ox and the head of a cow representing the gods Isis and Osiris receiving the dead (Olcott, W. T. 1914, 276). Unfortunately, the origin of the custom has not been traced neither by Lady Wilde nor her contemporaries. If cultures situated is such distant countries have some customs in common, is not surprising attributing the origin of the evil eye belief to a same root in both of them.

Now, we should take a look at the two faces of the god. One is that of the benevolent ruler which helps humans in their daily life. The other, is that of a punisher which can inflict the cruellest of all penalties.

As a giver of life the sun was worshipped with sacrifices and ceremonies in its honour to thank it for its favours. Taking into account that without sunlight life would not be possible on the surface of the earth, the sun came to be considered a phallic symbol and the Earth its feminine counterpart. Phallic symbols are believed to be an excellent protection against the evil eye because their nature is opposed to the destruction provoked by the effects of the evil eye. But this also offers us another connection with the sun and the evil eye. So, if we considered the sun as the biggest phallic symbol, it can also be considered the best protection. Although obvious solar symbols are not employed in the British Isles against fascination, it does appear in the form of fire, which is just a representation of the sun itself. This is clearly present in the bonfires which are lit during the fire festivals (Beltane, Midsummer) which have as an objective paying homage to the sun to get its support. Another example of solar symbolism in the evil eye tradition is a cure performed in Scotland by means of a circle. The rite was known as "Beannachdna-Cuairte" or "Blessing of the Circle" and consisted in passing a child through an iron hoop set on fire (Macinlay, J. M.

1993, 291). Obviously, the circle is a representation of the sun due to its clear resemblance to the astral body.

On the other hand, the sun also had the power to punish its worshippers at its will. Thus, the respect shown towards the sun was also a cause to fear its power. The sun was able to shine during many months leaving the soil dry and unable to bear fruits; it could evaporate the much needed water from the rivers; or could hide its bright face during eclipses. The human being was used to seeing the sun disappear every night, but not during the day. As a consequence, eclipses were considered as a terrible omen probably due to an offence which was made to the sun god. In the British Isles it was believed that the sun died at every sunset and was carried by horses to the gloomy kingdom of the undersea known in Scotland as "An Domhain" (Mackay, R. C. 1997).

During the London of the nineteenth century it was believed that if someone pointed to the sun, he would be fulminated (Opie, I. & Tatem, M. 1990, 381). This belief is still alive within Christian tradition, where it is considered disrespectful to point to the figures of the saints in a church. In Herefordshire it was considered unlucky to look the sun directly (Radford, E. & Radford, M. A. 1995, 329). In the northern counties of England it was also believed that if at a funeral the sun shone on a specific person, he would be the next to be buried (Henderson, W. 1879, 43). Here we may think in the fact that many charms and rituals are usually performed before sunrise or after sunset. A possible justification could be that, being that the sun was the main agent in provoking misfortunes, practices against its malefic action should be carried on when it was not present. In other words, they were hiding the operation from the evil eye in the sky.

Therefore, being that the sun is an enormous eye with the power to do good or evil, it is not surprising that it were blamed for the misfortunes among its worshippers. They would interpret the punishment (lack of rain, lack of light) as a consequence of their bad behaviour towards the god. With the passing of time, the sun came to be represented in the Earth in anthropomorphic or animal form (for example, Ra who has the head of a falcon but a human body; the Celtic god Lugh, who was a great warrior and a very skilled man) and finally human beings would be the representative of the solar god, as it could be the case with high priests. Thus, the power attributed originally to the sun could consequently pass to its human counterpart. So, he could cast his evil eye on those who had offended the god. He could threaten the worshipers with droughts and the folk would try not to offend him to avoid trouble. Years and years on, the power of the evil eye in the sky was also attributed to ancient kings and probably the primary origin of the concept being already lost. Thus, kings could not be looked directly in the eyes as it happened with the sun itself. The arrival of envy to the evil eye belief was also an easy task. When the power of fascination was attributed to higher ranks, in spite of the fact that they could have all the material belongings they wanted, there were some things unreachab

le even for them. Among these, the most common to the envied by the evil eye: beauty and healthy offspring. This could lead the powerful king to threaten with his power and his evil eye to destroy what they could not have. The appearance of envy in connection with the evil eye was probably the cause which meant that the evil eye could descend from the higher statuses because everyone suffers from envy. This was, as many other things, just a matter of time. Logic could also have played an important role. From the moment the identification between the evil eye and the

sun was no longer clear, envy occupied a more important place and those more prone to feel envy are those who live outside society (witches, thiefs) and those who lack material belongings, children and beauty.

In spite of the fact my solar theory is explained taking examples from the British Isles, it can be easily extrapolated to any other culture if we take a look at the myths and customs present in other parts of the world

16. Some Works about Fascination in the Literature of the British Isles

Throughout this thesis, I have showed some examples of literary references to the evil eye or to elements related to it. In this section, I am going to talk about some works which have the evil eye as a main topic, all of them written by authors from the British Isles. The thematic of the evil eye is obviously present in many other literary works around the work. However, here we are only going to see those which belong to the British Isles in order to maintain coherence within the study.

In this chapter we are going to see five works which deal with the evil eye from very different epochs and points of view. Nevertheless, they show the importance of the belief in their respective times. Introducing the topic in books addressed to young readers is a good way of keeping tradition alive without showing it as boring studies. Children, without being aware, are improving their knowledge about their cultural background. It is very important that the new generations can keep in touch with tradition so they can continue transmitting it. Other works, such as is the case of William Carleton's *The Evil Eye or Black Spectre*, should be recovered from its oblivion on dusty bookshelves and be reedited once and once again. *The Evil Eye or Black Spectre* is a novel which mingles a good story with a bit of folkloric research and which deserves more recognition. Thanks to the efforts of writers such as those who we are seen in this chapter and also those from the example along the pages of this thesis, the interest in fascination, as well as other cultural aspects, can become again a topic of interest for the common citizen.

16.1 Who's Afraid of the Evil Eye? Hazel Towson

Although the evil eye seems to be a topic likely to deal with terror, it is, interestingly, found it in books addressed to children. One of them is *Who's Afraid of the Evil Eye?* (fig. 44), by the children's author Hazel Townson's (Lancashire, 1928,) published in 1994 and illustrated by David McKee (Devon, 1935). It tells a day in the life of two children, Adam and Coral. The first is very superstitious, and the latter tries to dissuade him from using amulets. It is interesting to see how the author explorers the point of view of somebody who has been brought up believing in some traditions which condition his life. Although this is a short book (only eighty pages long with large typewriting and several illustrations) it includes important references related to the evil eye belief. Let us see some examples:

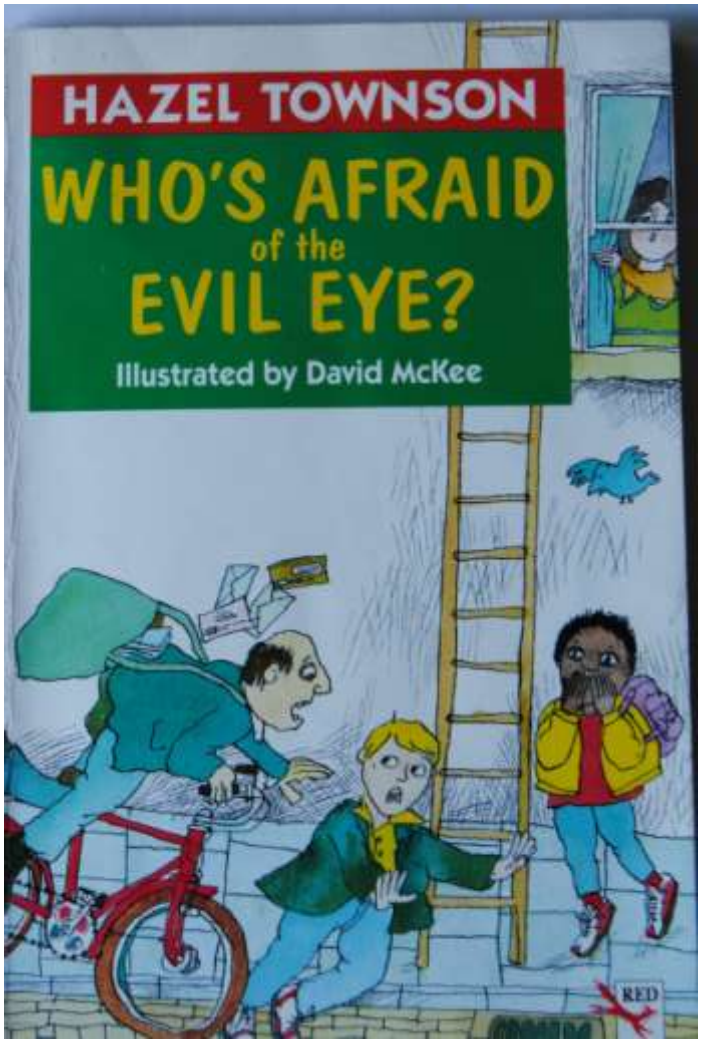

Figure 44 Cover of Hazel Townson's book. Photograph by Milagros Torrado Cespón

> 'Black cats are lucky; let them cross your path as often as you like', Adam's mother had pointed out a million times 'but white cats are a different matter; they spell trouble. Keep out of their way if you can' (Townson, H. 1994, 8).

> It's Friday the Thirteenth of May and the unluckiest date in the calendar! (Townson, H. 1994, 23).

> He had already armed himself with a rusted nail (as a charm against the Evil Eye), an acorn (to protect himself from being struck by lightning) and a lump of coal found in the road (for general fortune) (Townson, H. 1994, 24).

> 'Hey, that's a hag-stone!' cried Adam in amazement. When Coral looked blank he explained that a holed stone or hag-stone had magical powers and would keep bad luck away from the house (Townson, H. 1994, 44-45).

> Looking up into the woman's eyes, Adam turned suddenly pale with shock. She had one blue eye and one green. The Evil Eye! (Townson, H. 1994, 45).

16.2 *The Evil Eye.* Oisín McGann

Another book addressed to a young audience is *The Evil Eye* (figure 45), by Oisín McGann (Dublin, 1973). This is a very recent work, published in 2009, and which deals with the myth of Balor of the Evil Eye and his death at the hands of Lugh. The book starts with Balor trying to get rid off his three grandsons by throwing them into the sea. Although it includes some fictional additions from the author, it seems to be clearly based in the medieval book *Lebor Gabhála Éireann* or *The Book of Invasions of Ireland*. I had the opportunity of interviewing the author who told me that, although he has documented his work consulting several

bibliographic references, he states: "I wouldn't have referenced any one version of `Lebor Gabala' (or Leabhar Gabhála Éireann) directly, the bare bones of the story came from various versions of the story that I had heard as a kid". McGann describes the evil eye of Balor as "enourmous – a great lump in the side of his head. The lids of this eye were closed. When this eye opened, people died (McGann, O. 2009, 2). He decided to choose this mythological character because it is a good way of spreading myth knowledge among teenagers, who would feel attracted to "a story that would offer some creepy characters, a moody atmosphere and a good dose of violence", something that highly attracts them. He also admits the need for Irish society to know more about its mythology and folklore explaining that "we need these stories to help us remember where we came from, but we have to keep refreshing them, so that they keep on entertaining, and don't just become the subject of research for a few passionate scholars". For my status as researcher, I totally agree with his opinion. Sometimes it seems that academics use folkloric investigation as a sheer excuse to publish. Unfortunately, this is in fact the case of many published works which are used to

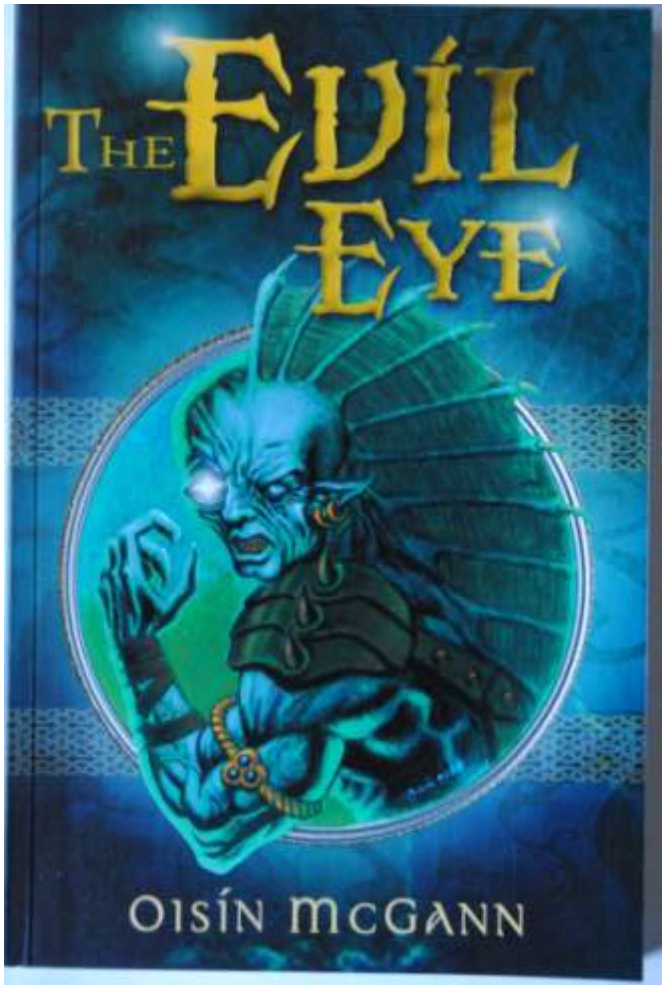

Figure 45 Cover of Oisín McGann's book, showing the author's conception of Balor of the Evil Eye. Photograph by Milagros Torrado Cespón

gain a position in that jungle I will talked about in chapter 14. Nevertheless, there are still many researchers who are genuinely worried about the preservation of customs and traditions. We should never forget that this has to be our main objective.

16.3 *The Evil Eye of Gondôr*. Bryan Owen

Another interesting work related to the power of fascination is the children's play *The Evil Eye of Gondôr*, by Bryan Owen. This play, published in 1983, tells the story of an isolated Valley who lived under the rule of a group of guardians who said to serve an Eye which was believed to cause misfortune to any who defied it: "it was awful, sir. It glows and throbs and makes noise. And it makes you ill, sir" (Owen, B. 1983, 14). The eye had been ruling the place for such a long time that there was nobody who questioned its authority and, apart from the guardians and one of the outlaws, no one had seen it. But this changes with the arrival of a stranger who convinces the dwellers that they are living in fear of a lie:

> You all believe in the power of the Eye when the Guardians say they have power over you, you all believe them. For generations you have taught your children to fear the Guardians and for generations you have feared the Guardians (Owen, B. 1983, 28).

After this, they confront the guardians to discover that the stranger was right. Although this is a short play and is addressed to children it teaches a good lesson. This play shows how sometimes the human being lives in fear of an invisible threat

instead of believing his real potential. It is much easier living under the rules of somebody who leaves you enough space to move around than thinking by ourselves and trying to improve the situation. More often than not, the intention of politicians is the latter, but the majority of them forget this once they reach control and they then favour the first because it is more comfortable. We can also relate the topic of this play with the sun theory. I stated that the power of the evil eye was initially exclusive to the sun but that it was acquired by the human being with the passing of time after forgetting the original source. In the same way, the inhabitants of Gondôr had forgotten which was the cause why they should fear the eye.

16.4 *The Evil Eye. A Tale*. Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley

Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley (1797-1851) also wrote about the evil eye in one of her short stories entitled "The Evil Eye. A Tale" (1829). This work deals with the topic but in a foreign context: Albania. The main character, Dimitri, is said to have the power of the evil eye after his family has been destroyed due to the death of his wife and the kidnapping of his daughter: "his mind became reckless, his countenance more dark; men trembled before his glance, women and children exclaimed in terror, 'The Evil Eye'"[62]. Mary Shelley faces the evil eye belief as a topic which has to be treated as a foreign issue. We can observe a certain sense of alienation towards a belief that she could observe in her own country of origin, but which was not a fashionable scenario according to the Gothic literary style she was following.

[62] http://arthursclassicnovels.com/shelley/eviley10.html

16.5 The Evil Eye; Or the Black Spectre. A Romance. William Carleton

A more extensive work is that of the Irish novelist William Carleton (1794-1869) who published a book entitled *The Evil Eye; or the Black Spectre. A Romance* in 1860. This is a novel about two Irish families, the Lindsays and the Goodwins, which, due to an inheritance have lost their friendship. Mrs Lindsay is a woman believed to have the power of the evil eye: "Mrs Lindsay, although she's unlucky to meet, and unlucky to cattle too, has no power over any one's life; but they say it[63] has always been in *her* family" (Carleton, W. 1860, 53). The same was suspected of his eldest son, Mr. Harry Woodward, who was a child from a previous marriage, and who had some physical characteristics which identified him as an evil eye beholder:

> His brows, which joined each other, were black, and, what was very peculiar, were heaviest where they met – a circumstance which, notwithstanding the regularity of his other features, give him, unless when he smiled, a frowning, if not a sinister aspect. That, however, which was most remarkable in his features was the extraordinary fact that his eyes were each of a different colour, one being black and piercing in its gleam, and the other grey, from which circumstance he was known from his childhood by the name of Harry na Suil Gloir (Carleton, W. 1860, 40)

An old man explains Harry that the power he has can be used both for evil and good:

> Let me advise you, young man, not to allow that mysteries and malignant power which you seen to possess to gratify itself by injury to your fellow-creatures. Let it be the principal purpose of your life to serve them by every means

[63] The evil eye.

> within your reach, otherwise you will neglect to your cost those great duties for which God reached you (Carleton, W. 1860, 57).

This character is also sometimes referred to as "Harry na Suil Balor" (Carleton, W. 1860, 119), showing the influence of the mythological figure of Balor of the Evil Eye. His ocular peculiarity is noticed by those living in the place who explain that "anybody, then, that has two eyes of different colours always has the Evil Eye, or the *Suil Balor*, and has the power of *overlookin*" (Carleton, W. 1860, 181). As a consequence, he is perceived as a threat up to the point that Alice Goodwin, the Goodwins' daughter, falls terribly ill believing that she has been affected by his evil eye:

> The dreadful image of Harry Woodward, or rather, the frightful power of his satanic spirit, fastened upon her morbid and diseased imagination with such force, that no effort of her reason could shake them off that dreadful eye was perpetually upon her, and before her –both asleep and awake. (Carleton, W. 1860, 312).

The source of the evil eye is also explained in this novel: "it comes from the fairies. Doesn't everyone know that the fairies themselves have the power of overlookin' both cattle and Christian?" (Carleton, W. 1860, 181).

It is also interesting to note that the author himself includes some meta-textual references explaining some terms and superstitions. In order to do so, the author writes in the first person with his own voice but without introducing himself into the plot. For example:

> A belief in the existence and office of the Banshee was, at that period of which we write, almost universally held by the

> peasantry; and even about half a century ago it was one of the strongest dogmas of popular superstition (Carleton, W. 1860, 337).

When we reach chapter 17, we doubt if we are still reading a novel or an essay about folklore. The first five pages of this chapter are entirely descriptive of the figure of the Irish bandit known as "tory" who appears in the book. This type of comment leaves the reader with the feeling of having learnt something interesting from the novel apart from enjoying a good story.

17. Current Trends in the Evil Eye Belief

Once we have gone through the written testimonies, we should take a look at the current status of the evil eye belief in the British Isles. After talking to natives of the Isle of Man, Ireland, Wales and England, I found out that the evil eye was either unknown to them or that it was considered it as an old-fashioned belief. Only few people knew about customs related to fascination which they have experienced or that they remember having heard in childhood. In one of my attempts to get information about the current state of the evil eye belief, I published an article in the Manx newspaper "IOMToday". Among the answers I obtained from my request one was from a man named Claus Flegel who told me:

> "I recently bought a pair of glasses with the name "Evil Eye" (I bought them despite the name, not because of it!). I did not even know what an evil eye is until I read the article on iomtoday.co.im about your work"

This is an example of the current state of the belief. The mentioned "evil eye glasses" are a model made by Adidas especially for sports in which the person needs special protection from sun (cycling and climbing). Thus, the name fits the product perfectly by counteracting the evil eye of the sun by the use of an equivalent (an eye for an eye).

I also published a letter demanding information in a Welsh newspaper, which received some answers. Although it only served as a way of assuring the continuation of some beliefs already cited, such as the use of the horseshoe, especially if found.

The current state of the belief in Ireland was well summarized in the Irish writer Oisín McGann's words when I asked him about the evil eye:

> "The idea that someone can curse or damage you with a look has passed on, except perhaps for someone who is both very old and very superstitious. But the phrase `to give someone the evil eye' is still very common, though many people might not know where it came from. I think the term to give someone a `baleful' look might come from the Balor legend."

Internet resources are also a useful resource for getting information about the topic. In this case we cannot talk about the topic from the point of view of the British Isles, because the Internet has no frontiers. In spite of this, the influence from the countries of my study is easily identifiable. We can find many references to fascination, nevertheless, web pages are not always reliable. Some can provide interesting and contrasted data, while others can lead to misunderstanding. The first we find is the reference from Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evil_eye, where the data are general although they offer interesting links and references. One web page worth mentioning is http://www.luckymojo.com/evileye.html from which, apart from data about the evil eye, one can find information about other folkloric aspects. This web also presents several articles and provides the reader with bibliography about the topic. It deals with the evil eye belief from a universal point of view. Nevertheless, we can also find specific references to the British Isles here. In other web pages we can find data about fascination within a general overview of folklore or articles about the evil eye which could be considered interesting but which lack references. In http://www.themystica.com/mystica/default.html, a page which considers itself as an on-line encyclopaedia of the occult, we find an article

about the evil eye belief from a global point of view which includes links for the explanation of key words.

What is interesting when searching the web is the large amount of pages selling evil eye jewellery, especially the now ubiquitous Turkish blue eye, in all colours, shapes and sizes. In some pages, we can find the actual meaning of the blue eye, such as in http://www.nazarboncugu.com/, which offers detailed information about the confection of the amulets and about the belief itself. Although this has never been a common amulet in the British Isles, it is nowadays a universal one and, therefore, an amulet used also in British Isles today. In fact, when asking some people about the evil eye, they tend to refer to the Turkish eye as it is the most recognizable item belonging to this superstition they found in nowadays society.

The page http://www.witchballs.com/ is also worth visiting. Apart from the possibility of buying a witch ball, it also offers an explanation of its use and origin. It does not provide much information, but shows a great variety of photographs of these balls, beautifully confectioned.

If we want to know more about the Sheela-nag-Gig, especially seeing a lot of high quality photographs, http://www.sheelanagig.org/ would fulfil our needs. This page was created by "The Sheela Na Gig Project", who wanted to divulge the existence, folklore and theories about Sheela-na-Gig in the United Kingdom. They offer many data plus a large quantity of information about articles, books and other web pages. They do not limit their work to just presenting a photograph, but also offer information about the site where the figure appears. Anybody interested in doing research about this topic should check this web page, especially for photographic material.

Searching the web we can also find innumerable images exemplifying the evil eye. Although most of them are related to horrible eyes, we can also find curious pictures. Among them, this one is remarkable (fig. 46):

Figure 46

It belongs to a web page named http://www.icanhascheezburger.com which includes, among others, photographs of cats in funny situations. In this case, we find the black cat, with all the evil and good connotations it may have, and also a webcam which plays the role of a deformed eye. It is an interesting way of updating the belief, which, somehow, demonstrates that the evil eye is still known. We could go even further stating that this caption could be exemplifying the evil eye of modern technologies which now rule our lives.

The revival that witchcraft has experimented the last decades has also increased the interest in the evil eye topic. This new approach, known as "Wicca" (founded by the British Gerard Gardner around 1950), has acquired the status of religion among its followers all around the world. The word "wicca" was also

carefully chosen as it is the Old English form for witch. This has also meant an updating of the evil eye. Among the charms they practise, we can find many related to the evil eye. As the origin of Wicca was in England, the influence of folklore from the British Isles is evident when we talk about fascination. This also happens to all the customs exported to the United States and other former British colonies. Therefore, it is very usual finding the same rites in American, Irish and British contexts. There are a lot of web pages about Wicca and, as it happens with most of the information in the Internet, we cannot either establish a frontier about what belongs to the British Isles and what does not. Searching the web, I have found an interesting definition of the evil eye provided by a Wicca webpage (http://www.wicca-spirituality.com):

> The Evil Eye was a fear derived from the myth of the ancient Goddess Maat, whose All-Seeing Eye could assess a person's soul at a glance. Over time, this became perceived as dangerous - not merely assessing but cursing.
> The Evil Eye was associated with Witches in particular, but all women - under domination by a patriarchy - were considered able to curse with a glance. (Hence the old rules about women keeping their eyes downcast, and especially never looking at the men.)
> Perhaps naturally, the cures for the evil eye are also feminine symbols (http://www.wicca-spirituality.com/wicca-symbol.html#evil_eye)

The reference to the "All-Seeing Eye" of the Goddess Maat is, in fact, what is commonly known as the eye of Ra. She was an Egyptian sun-goddess, believed to be the daughter of Ra (Budge, E. A. W. 2003, 418).

We can also find protective charms to avoid the influence of evil eyes. One example is that in the webpage http://www.everythingunderthemoon.net/. You need the following elements: rosemary, lavender, black pepper, cinnamon, ginger root, six white candles and one black candle. For a better action of this charm, it should be executed during a new moon phase. After drawing a circle, the performer faces the north, sits and meditates. After this, he lights all the white candles clockwise, that is, following the course of the sun as I have explained before. He uses a white candle to light the black one and the mixture of herbs. Then, the following must be recited:

> Whatever evil comes to me here
> I cast you back, I have no fear
> With the speed of wind and the dark of night
> May all of your harboring take flight
> With the swiftness of the sea
> And all the power found in me
> As I will so mote it be

To finish, the performer says in loud voice: "I cast you out". Then, he blows out the black candle. After the plant's mixture is burnt, he draws an eye on the black candle, wraps it in a white cloth and buries it in a back yard (http://www.everythingunderthemoon.net/spells/evil_eye.htm). This charm keeps alive some of the traditional methods to protect against the evil eye. Mixtures of herbs are typical in fascination, although those mentioned in this charm are not commonly used in the British Isles through history. The spell somehow reminds us to those recorded by Alexander Carmichael in his Carmina Gadelica in which the evil eye was urged to return to its sender, although the traditional Scottish charm is much more violent:

> Whoso laid on thee the eye,
> May it lie upon himself,

May it lie upon his house,
May it lie upon his flocks.
On the shuffling carlin.
On the sour-faced carlin.
On the bounding carlin,
On the sharp-shanked carlin.
Who arose in the morning.
With her eye on her flocks.
With her flocks in her ' seoin,'
May she never own a fold.
May she never have half her desires,
The part of her which the ravens do not eat,
May the birds devour. (Carmichael, A. 1900 vol II, 56-57)[64]

The last part of the ritual also offers us another link with traditional practices: burying the amulet. As I have explained in other chapters, witch bottles and, sometimes iron objects and even animals, were buried in order to protect the house from the evil eye. Thus, although Wicca offers us a new perspective of the evil eye tradition, its practitioners keep using elements and traditions inherited from ancient practices, although not necessarily from the British Isles. This means that even though the belief is kept alive in these circles it has been updated (if not contaminated) mixing characteristics of various traditions showing again how globalization is also reaching the world of superstition.

Nowadays, the presence of the evil eye belief in the British Isles has decrease with the past of years. If we compare the current number of people believing in fascination or with knowledge about the charms and amulets with those people at the

[64] Se be co rinn duit an t-suil,/ Gil 'n curn i air fein, / Gu 'n curn i air a thur, / Gu 'n curn i air a spreidh, / Air a chaillicli mhungaicli, / Air a chaillaich mhiongaich, /Air a chaillaich mhangaich, / 'S air a chaillich gheur-luirg, / A dh' eirich 's a mhaduinn, / 'S a suil na seilbh, / 'S a seilbh na seoin, / Nar a leatha a buaile fein, / Nar a leatha leth a deoin, / A chuid nach ith na fithich di, / Gu 'n ith na h-eoin.

beginning at the twentieth century, we can realize that things have change a lot since then. Society is moving to scepticism. Since the human being believed that he was able to accomplish almost any target and achieve all the possible goals by himself, superstition was forgotten. Obviously, I am not saying that we should bring them back to daily life, but we should know our customs and traditions as a way of being in touch with the beliefs of our ancestors.

18. Conclusions

After having finished this thesis I can state that I considered it to be a work still in progress. Let me be more specific: in progress but with a feeling of fulfilment. In spite of the fact all the books present in the bibliography and all those that were not of specific use for this thesis but which had enriched my knowledge of folklore, there are still many pages to fill. Probably, the data now necessary are to be found in remote parts of rural, let us say, Ireland, or, in an attempt to unify beliefs by searching a common root, in any part of the world. This, as I said in the introduction, would be a work which would last beyond my lifetime. Nevertheless, I have to say that I am pleased with the result of these years of work.

I started with a definition (or definitions) of the word "fascination" and its other nomenclatures. That section was a way of proving that, although the original intention is common, there are small variants which give interesting views of the matter. Taking this into account, we can think of all the possible definitions which have been lost in the course of time which were more precise and, as a consequence, avoided misunderstandings. The distinction between witchcraft and evil eye was surely well stated at the beginning. Now, we find two similar but different beliefs which are fought with the same weapons.

It was indispensable including a chapter relating the impact of Christianity on the evil eye tradition. This can also be observed in any other folkloric aspect which somehow made difficult the full introduction of Christian cults. Nevertheless, although nowadays the difference between pagan and Christian practices is often indistinguishable, we can discriminate both with a little analysis.

Those who cast the evil eye can be found in all social statuses and, sometimes, having a particular physical feature is not enough to recognize them. As a result, I decided to make an analysis of those who are often accused: witches, gypsies and fairies. This chapter showed the way in which both the supernatural and the real world intermingle. Although witches were suspected years ago, the concept of "witch" has acquired a different meaning in today's society. A witch is any (woman) who has evil intentions, and thus, can be perfectly accused of casting an evil eye on those who she envies. In the case of gypsies, accusing them of casting the evil eye is a result of fear towards those folk who never stayed in the same place for a long time or used to talk much about their culture to those alien to it. Talking about fairies was also necessary: they are still an important part of the folklore of the British Isles in the twenty-first century.

Animals are also often considered important performers within fascination, either due to their use as amulets or to their capacity of casting the evil eye themselves. Some of them, like cats and snakes, deserve a deeper analysis than the others because they bear a special significance in general folklore.

The identification of the evil eye with sexual symbols gives a new perspective in the interpretation of the belief. It seems that all that moves the human being is related to the continuity of the species. Could then envy and, as a consequence, the evil eye belief, be considered as a mere instinct? I leave this question to those who are studying the mysteries of the human brain.

The importance of a concrete date in the calendar is also a factor which has been analyzed. In the British Isles some rituals should be performed during a specific celebration, otherwise, they would not work. This also has an explanation that which links again the prehistoric customs with modern times.

Iron and silver seem to be, among other metals, the most recurrent against fascination. Their value as protective devices is still alive in those pendants everybody wears or on the always trendy horseshoe. It seems that things have changed little in that sense.

The topic of purification has been exemplified through the use of fire and water. Nevertheless, water is not the only liquid used in relation to the evil eye, as is the case of urine, saliva and blood. These exemplify the importance of vital liquids within fascination.

The use of a determinate plant against witchcraft and/or the evil eye is a matter of a long tradition of its use in cures. Some of them are still considered very valuable. If we pay attention, we realize that the use of plants as medicine is living a sort of revival in today's society. People tend more and more to use natural products to avoid filling their organism with chemical products. Nevertheless, they are now used taking into account their curative properties, not their magic ones.

However, the most common element in the traditional practices of the British Isles is the fact that charms, rituals or actions must be repeated. Number three is the most used, maybe because it does not imply a lot of repetition, but especially because it bears great significance in the society of the British Isles. In addition, it offers a connection with Christianity and the representation of the Sacred Trinity. Other numbers are also widely used, but there is always an explanation for doing so.

Then, I talked about other elements that also occupy an important place in fascination. So, I decided to include all them in a chapter. This is the case of colur blue, which introduces a new theory of its use in the British Isles which can be compared to that of Mediterranean countries. The role of dust must also be included in this thesis. Although is use seems to be confined to the Isle of Man, its importance

there was too significant to be eluded. Stones, the first artefact used by the human being, are also included in this chapter. It is not surprising then, finding them as amulets used to counteract the effects of an evil eye. Their original function as a projectile has acquired thus a symbolic significance to threaten the evil eye beholder. The use of knots and threads is a very frequent method in the British Isles, especially in Scotland, so they deserved further explanation. Nevertheless, it is not exclusive to here, but a widespread device to counteract the evil eye which we can find in many parts of the world. Both knots and threads have more applications to that related to fascination, especially due to their meaning as a ligature.

Property and offspring are still our most precious belongings. Although cattle do not have the same importance for all the society, other elements have occupied their place. This is the case of important jobs. An example is our competitive society, where sometimes it seems more important to be the first to get a job than to help another fellow who can be doing a better work than you. It seems that society has changed very little since the origins of fascination.

In spite of the fact the evil eye seems to be a matter of low classes, it is also present in the highest statuses. Curiously, those belonging to the clergy were often accused of casting the malefic glance. We can also find examples among kings. Nobody is free from envy. But the most important example in ancient literature is that of the Fomorian king, Balor, of the Evil Eye. This figure is a good example of the fatal power of the eye.

The numerous examples recorded along the years have proved the importance of fascination in the British Isles. Its role in the present day seems to have changed a lot, but this does not mean that it had become unknown to all. The evil eye survives

hidden in rationality, but it does survive. This is something which I think was clear in the chapter dealing with the psychological point of view of fascination.

The theories I have presented also deserve a deeper study to expand them, because I consider that this has been a way of presenting them. In this sense, this thesis offers a starting point for many other research projects. For example, the identification of the sun with the primary cause of the evil eye deserves a study from a worldwide perspective. Although some may consider that this should have been done here, from my point of view, it would be a way of diverting the topic of this thesis. Due to this reason, most of the examples used to justify and support this theory are from sources from the British Isles.

Several literary examples are present all through the text, showing how the literature of a geographical zone reflects what is alive among its inhabitants. In spite of this, I have considered that it was also necessary to include a chapter to make reference to those fictional works which deal with the topic in more depth.

Once I finished revising the texts which served as the skeleton of this thesis, I thought that it would be useful to take a look at the cyberspace, which is the best way of exemplifying the current trends of the evil eye belief. The main conclusion to be drawn is that we should put an emphasis in the study of traditional beliefs and practices. This does not mean that we should stop using modern medicine and start practicing charms, which would be nonsense, but we should know them as a way of understanding the idiosyncrasy of societies which are very close and which could also facilitate the understanding of practices of other cultures from other parts of the world.

I have tried to write a thesis which is both easy to read and which provides all the important information while avoiding superficial data. I am satisfied with the

result and the field of research in which I have been involved during several years of my academic life. To finish, I would like to address the following Irish blessing to all those helping hands I found along the way:

> Go raibh do ghloine lán go deo.
> Go raibh láidir go breá
> an dion thar do cheann.
> Go raibh tú í Neamh,
> leathúair os comhair
> a bhfuil a fhíos ag an diabhal
> atá tú bás.[65]

[65]May your glass be ever full./ May the roof over your head /be always strong./ May you be in heaven/ a half hour before / the devil knows you're dead.

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Unpublished Resources:

- Folk Life Survey, unpublished. Manx National Heritage. Available at the library of the Manx Museum, Douglas
- Ecclesiastical Records of the Isle of Man, unpublished. Available at the library of the Manx Museum, Douglas.

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